

ALABAMA RE-ENTRY RESOURCE GUIDE | 2024





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The Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project (APAEP) is an Auburn University initiative that provides access to sustained, quality education to people incarcerated in Alabama.

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Alabama Power
Foundation

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ALABAMA RE-ENTRY RESOURCE GUIDE

You are not alone in this.



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Hello!

We know that you probably have a lot on your mind right now. Whether you have recently made it outside, or you're getting ready to do so, we hope that the information you find in this guide will be helpful with your next steps. You might have the support of family or friends as you transition, or you might be going it alone (for now). In either case, there are communities of people looking forward to seeing you. The road ahead will not be easy, but you will have people and organizations to lean on. The Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project (APAEP) is one of them.

APAEP was founded back in 2002 because people on the inside told us they wanted to learn about poetry. And about art. And history and literature and philosophy and science—and, and, and. And for more than 20 years, we have brought classes about all of those things and more. Students who have taken those classes have created amazing works—of visual art, of creative writing—some of which has been displayed in national art galleries or published in a variety of anthologies and journals. Some students have enrolled in our college program and earned their Bachelor of Science degrees from Auburn University. We know how much it is possible for people to achieve, what fantastic things they will accomplish, if only the right tools and spaces are available.

This guide is designed to be one of those tools. We also have a space in Birmingham: the Community Education Resource Center (CERC). If you have questions about this guide, please feel free to visit CERC, or call (659) 214-9329, anytime Monday–Friday between 8:00am and

5:00pm. CERC also offers classes to assist with your re-entry with subjects including Computer Skills, Money Management, Public Speaking, Professional Writing, and many more. And most importantly: all classes are free!

In the meantime, we're happy that this guide has made its way into your hands. We hope that you find it useful. It will be a continual project for us as we make changes, updating old information or adding new resources.

Good luck. We're here for you. You will accomplish amazing things.

The APAEP Team

Glossary of Terms

IDENTIFICATION

Access | a means of approaching or entering a place or website

Accompanied | to go somewhere with someone

Acquire | to buy or obtain for oneself

Annually | once a year, every year

Associated | connected with something else

Compliant | to agree with others or obey rules

Decree | an official order issued by a legal authority

Eligibility | having the right to do obtain something through satisfaction of the appropriate conditions

Enrollment | the action of enrolling or being enrolled / officially register as a member of an institution or a student on a course

Ensure | make certain that something shall occur or be the case

Ignition | the mechanism for bringing about ignition in an internal combustion engine, typically activated by a key or switch

Link | short for hyperlink (a quick way to get from one webpage to another one)

Navigate | guide over a specified route or terrain

Obtain | get, acquire, or secure something

Polling Place | location where you go to vote

Precautions | a measure taken in advance to prevent something dangerous, unpleasant, or inconvenient from happening

Privileges | a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group

Process | a series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end

Renewed | having been resumed, re-established, or revived

Revoked | put an end to the validity or operation of

Safeguard | a measure taken to protect someone or something or to prevent something undesirable

Sanctioned | a threatened penalty for disobeying a law or rule

School transcript | record of all your academic accomplishments

Secular | attitudes, activities, or other things that have no religious or spiritual basis

Tolls | a charge payable for permission to use a particular bridge or road

Unhoused | having no accommodation or shelter

Verify | make sure or demonstrate that something is true, accurate, or justified

Waived | refrain from insisting on or using a right or claim

Website | a set of related web pages located under a single domain name, for example: <https://apaep.auburn.edu>

EMPLOYMENT

Affiliation | to be connected with something or someone

Aligning | to bring something into line

Appropriate | suitable or proper

Aspire | to seek to accomplish a particular goal

Assessed | evaluate or estimate the nature, ability, or quality of

Capabilities | the power or ability to do something

Connectivity | to be connected

Contracting | decreases in size

Credentials | a qualification, achievement, personal quality, or aspect of a person's background

Downplay | make something appear less important than it really is

Impact | the action of one object coming forcibly into contact with another

Internship | professional learning experience

Landscape | a particular area of activity

Log-in | information needed to enter website or account online

Maximize | make as large or great as possible

Medium-term | lasting for a period of time that is not long nor short

Proactive | creating or controlling a situation by causing something to happen rather than responding to it after it has happened

Prospective | expected or expecting to be something particular in the future

Protocol | the official procedure of system of rules

Remote | work that is done online rather than in person or in an office

Research | investigation into and study of materials

Scam | to deceive or defraud someone

Sectors | an area or portion that is distinct from others

Soft skill | behavior that describes how a person approaches their tasks

Vocational | relating to an occupation or employment

HOUSING

Alternative | available as another possibility

Boutique | a small store providing fashionable clothes or accessories

Interfaith | between different religions of members of different religions

Lease | a contract where one party conveys land, property, services to another for a specific time

Online | connected to a computer or network

Self-sufficiency | needing no outside help in satisfying basic needs

Sustainable | able to be maintained at a certain level

Transitioning | to make a change or shift from one state, subject, or place to another

EDUCATION

Accommodation | fit in with the wishes or needs of

Apprenticeships | learning a trade from a skilled employer

Immunization | becoming immune to infection

Mastered | gain complete knowledge or skill

Nominal | existing in name only

Portal | a website or web page providing access or links to other sites with your information

Prioritize | designate or treat as

more important than other things

Skill set | a person's range of skills or abilities

Syllabi/Syllabus | an outline of the subjects in a course of study or teaching

Transcript | a written or printed version of material originally presented in a different form

Vaccination | treatment with a vaccine to produce immunity against a disease

MEDICAL

Colonoscopy | a procedure to examine the colon

Gynecologist | doctor who specializes in treating female sexual organs and reproductive tracts

Holistic | belief that systems should be analyzed as a whole and not as collections of parts

Mammogram | an x-ray of the breast or chest that looks for early signs of cancer

Preexisting | having existed at or from an earlier time

MISCELLANEOUS SUPPORT

Activate | make something active

Conferencing | participate in a conference call or telephone call where many individuals can meet at the same time

Data | way that a phone accesses the internet without a wi-fi connection

Download | copy from one computer system to another

Email | messages distributed by electronic means from one computer or device to one or more individuals

Foreseeable | able to be predicted

Home screen | the first screen you will see when opening a phone

Password | a secret word or phrase that must be used to gain admission to a website along with a username

Petition | a formal written request appealing to authority with respect to a particular cause

Platform | websites or applications that allow users to create and share content

Prospective | expected or expecting to something particular in the future

Provider | a service or person

that provides something

Recruiter | a person whose job is to enlist or enroll people as employees

Username | an identification used by a person (along with a password) in order to access a computer, network, or online services

Web browser | an application for accessing websites and the Internet

Wi-fi | a device allowing computers, smartphones, or other devices to connect to the Internet or communicate with one another wirelessly within a particular area

...

SECTION 1

Getting Your Identification Card (ID)

HELLO EVERYONE, TAMMY HERE. Welcome home! What an exciting time for you and a little overwhelming. I know you have a lot going on right now, a lot of emotions and things you need to accomplish. One of the first things you are going to need to get is your identification information sorted out. This section here will help you to know what offices to go to and what information you might need to get you ID. Listed below are some basic forms of identification that you might have already and some you might be able to obtain now or in the future.



Department of Corrections Identification Card

First let's talk about your state issued department of corrections identification card. For many people, this might be the only form of ID they have when they leave prison. This might not seem like an important ID to have, but it can be a great place to start. This identification card has your picture and legal name, so it might be able to help you get the other forms you need.

Birth Certificate

For most people, their birth certificate was something that was issued to them on the day they were born. Many times this document can be lost or misplaced during incarceration, so it's important that you are able to get this as soon as possible. One of the best places to visit to get your birth certificate is the local health department in your county, or the county you were born in. These places will have the most information for you and will be able to help you everything you need.

BIRMINGHAM

1400 Sixth Ave. S., Birmingham | (205) 933-9110

www.jcdh.org/

MOBILE

251 N. Bayou St., Mobile | (251) 690-8150

<https://mchd.org/>

MONTGOMERY

3060 Mobile Highway, Montgomery | (334) 293-6400

<https://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/montgomery/>

You can also visit this website if you were born in Alabama:

www.alabamapublichealth.gov/vitalrecords/birth-certificates.html

If you were not born in Alabama, visit the link provided below:

www.usbirthcertificates.com

There is going to be some basic information you will need to have to get your birth certificate.

- Legal name given at birth
- Mother's full name or Father's full name (or both)
- County or hospital of birth

If you do not have access to a computer or feel comfortable navigating the websites listed above, you can visit the CERC office in Birmingham, 131 41st Street South in order to use their computer lab during operating hours, or call (205) 916-0123 Ext 128, and a peer specialist at the Offender Alumni Association (OAA) can provide assistance.

Social Security Card

A Social Security card is another form of identification that is usually obtained by a person when they are born. The local social security office is a place you can start when you are trying to obtain this ID. Physical locations and phone numbers for these offices are listed below. You might need to call ahead to set up an appointment.

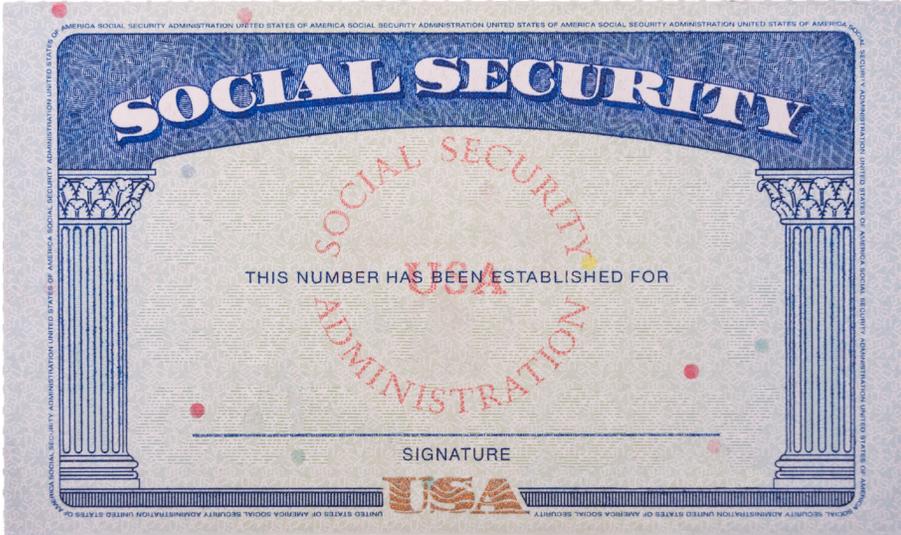


PHOTO FROM ADOBE STOCK

BESSEMER

5475 Academy Way, Bessemer | (800) 772-1213

BIRMINGHAM

1200 Rev Abraham Woods Jr Blvd N., Birmingham | (800) 772-1213

MOBILE

550 Government St., Mobile | (866) 593-1922

MONTGOMERY

4344 Carmichael Rd., Suite 100, Montgomery | (866) 593-0914

The national social security website will also provide you with the information you need to get your social security card.

www.ssa.gov

State ID or Driver's License

Ok, so now you are ready to get your state ID or driver's license. These are IDs that most people have and are generally the most accepted.

Depending on your background, you may or may not be able to obtain your driver's license immediately after release, but you will be able to get a state ID. There might be fines that you will have to pay, or a waiting period before you can apply or re-apply. Contact your local Department of Motor Vehicles office to set up an appointment, or find out the hours they are open. Websites are not available for the locations listed below.

To find out more about obtaining your driver's license or state ID, visit this website for more helpful information:

<https://alabamadi.alea.gov/>

BESSEMER

Bessemer Courthouse

1801 3rd Avenue, Bessemer | (205) 426-7958

BIRMINGHAM

Jefferson County Office

908 Bankhead Hwy W, Birmingham | (205) 252-7445

Shelby County

208 Service Center, Birmingham | (205) 829-1270

MOBILE

3400 Demetropolis Road, Mobile | (251) 660-2330

MONTGOMERY

Montgomery County

301 South Ripley Street, Montgomery | (334) 676-6002

or

1040 Coliseum Boulevard, Montgomery | (334) 272-8868

Here are some accepted forms of identification that will be needed to obtain a driver's license or state ID:

- US birth certificate (cannot be a photocopy)
- Social Security Card
- Proof of school enrollment or graduation
- 2 proofs of principal residence (official mail or copy of your lease)
- Out of State Driver's License
- State-Issued Non-Driver ID
- U.S. or Foreign Passport
- U.S. Certificate of Naturalization
- Certificate of Citizenship
- U.S. Military ID
- Work ID (If applicant is employee of agency / company making request)

Maybe your driver's license has been suspended or revoked? These offices and website will be able to give you additional information regarding your license and what you will need to do to get it reinstated.

What if you need your license to get back and forth to work? The Alabama hardship license offers an opportunity for some people who cannot legally drive to regain limited driving privileges. Many people do not know that they can obtain a hardship license in Alabama. The website below will give you more information as well as the website and driver's license offices listed above.

www.alea.gov/dps/driver-license/license-and-id-cards/hardship-driver-license

A HARDSHIP LICENSE costs the same as a regular Driver's License, can be renewed annually, and helps you make progress on obtaining your regular license. You have to be able to prove hardship or have documentation of enrollment in, or completion of, an Alabama Department of Corrections program. There are 4 ways a person may be considered for a Hardship License*:

1. Participation in an Alabama Department of Corrections regulated **work release program**.
2. Participation in a recognized/compliant **Community Corrections Program**.
3. Released from Alabama Department of Corrections custody.
4. License suspended/revoked and **inability to obtain reasonable transportation**.

Applicants will have limited driving privileges. A Hardship Driver's License will be subject to all laws, rules, regulations, restrictions, and

* Source: Alabama Administrative Code r. 760-X-1-.24

limitations that a traditional driver's license.

WORK | Driving to and from a place of employment, job training, job readiness programming, or job interview.

CHURCH | Driving to and from a religious service, affiliated religious function, or a civic event recognized to meet basic secular needs for full societal participation.

EDUCATION | Driving to and from a sanctioned educational institution recognized by the State of Alabama where the individual is a regularly enrolled student, schools or childcare facilities where a family member or dependent is enrolled, or events sanctioned by the school or childcare facility where the student, family member, or dependent is enrolled.

PROGRAMS | Driving to or from any court-ordered program, treatment, community service, or event, including but not limited to drug or alcohol counseling or other rehabilitation program; court appearance; supervising probation and parole field office for reporting or programming; Community Corrections Programs (CCP); or work release program.

MEDICAL | Driving to and from a scheduled medical or mental health treatment appointment, a pharmacy for obtaining prescriptions, or in the event of a medical emergency.

GROCERY/HOUSEHOLD | Driving to and from purchasing food and household necessities and performing essential household duties.

VOTING | Driving to or from polling place, if eligible to vote.

* Source: Alabama Administrative Code r. 760-X-1-.24

SECTION 2

Housing

HI, I'M EDDIE, and a recent returning citizen after serving 31 years, 2 months, and 8 days in prison. Everyone reentering society needs housing, so the first step in any successful transition



to a life of freedom begins with sustainable housing. Knowing what your options are will help you make a plan before you walk out of the gate. Having a plan will help reduce stress during your reentry. By answering a few simple questions, you can identify your housing needs and priorities:

Your Support System

Do you have family or friends who can provide housing support?

Your Employment

Are you employed or seeking employment?

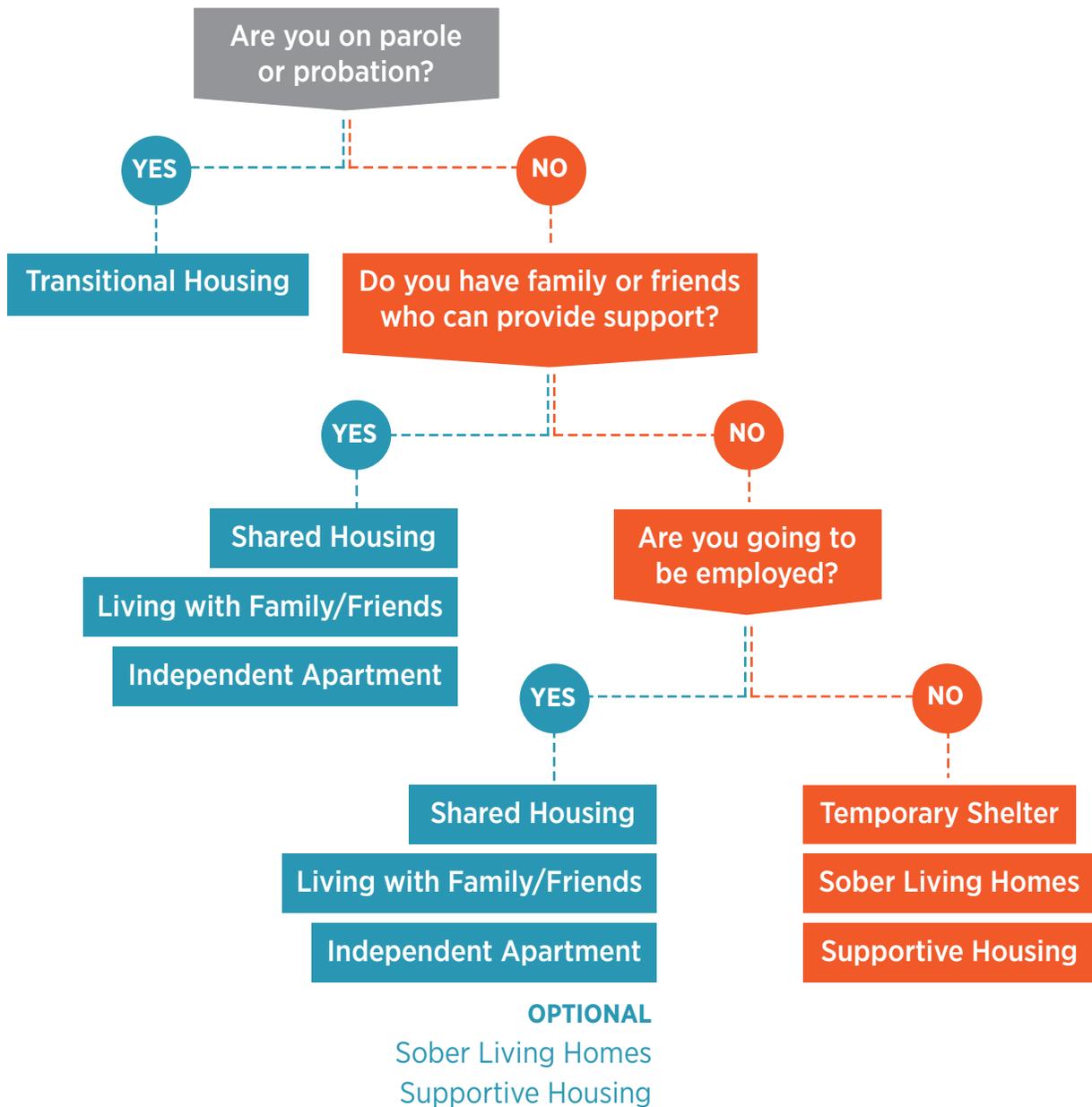
Your Legal Status

Are there any legal obligations or restrictions affecting your housing options, such as being on parole or probation?

Whether you're considering living with family, seeking transitional housing, or exploring other options, this assessment will guide you in finding the right fit for your circumstances.

Look at the decision tree to see which option is best for you, then look at *Housing Options* for more information. Once you review the housing option that best fits your needs, go to the *Resources by Area* section of this chapter to reach out to the appropriate agencies or organizations that can help you.

If you need help, you can always call CERC at **(659) 214-9329** to schedule a time to talk with a support specialist.



Housing Options

Shared Housing

Living with roommates in a shared apartment or house can be a more affordable option and provide social support—just make sure you have good roommates!

Living with Family or Friends

Staying with people close to you can provide a stable and supportive environment for reentry.

Independent Apartment

If you have stable employment and income, you may prefer renting your own apartment. There can be substantial upfront costs though—see “Renting Information” below.

Re-entry or Transitional Housing

Halfway houses or transitional housing facilities offer structured support and counseling. There is often a time limit on how long you can live there (often between 3 – 12 months).

Government-Assisted Housing

Overseen by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), this includes options such as public housing, Section 8 vouchers, or other government-assistance programs designed to provide affordable housing to low-income individuals and families.

Temporary Shelter

In cases of immediate housing need, temporary shelters provide short-term accommodation until more permanent housing arrangements can be made.

Sober Living Home

Sober living homes provide a supportive environment for individuals recovering from substance use. They offer a drug-free living space and may include counseling and support services.

Supportive Housing

Supportive housing programs provide long-term housing assistance for individuals with special needs, including those with mental health issues or disabilities.

Homeless Outreach Programs

For individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, homeless outreach programs may offer temporary housing solutions and support services.

Additional Information

Okay, you have used the decision tree and hopefully know what you are looking for in housing. I have been through the reentry process, and yes, it can be stressful. Here's what you need to know:

When you apply for housing help, you might need to show papers about your past and what you've done since then to prepare for your successful transition to a life of freedom. For me, that meant pursuing my education and earning certificates for self-betterment.

There are different options for housing help, like public housing (HUD) or getting help with paying rent. Each has its own rules, so you need to see which one works best for you.

Oh, yeah! This is very important. Take your time finding the right place for you. Remember the wise words of Benjamin Franklin, "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." You gotta know what you're doing and where you're going.

Start Fresh Next Steps

When it comes to finding housing, it's all about networking. My old man used to say, "It's not *what* you know, but *who* you know." Watch out, I'm about to give you the game with these three networking tips:

- 1 Talk to Local Housing People:** Call or visit your local PHA (Public Housing Agency); they can help you with the forms and stuff. Here is a directory for Alabama: www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/PHA_Contact_Report_AL.pdf.
- 2 Find Helpful Groups:** Look for groups that can help you with things like finding a job, stopping bad habits, or feeling better in your head. They make things easier. Check out the Birmingham Re-Entry Alliance here: www.bhmreentry.org/
- 3 Join Your Community:** Make friends with people and groups in your neighborhood who help people who've been in prison. They can give you good advice and make you feel better when you're stressed.

Renting Information

You'll need to know that most property management firms like to run a background check. Hey, don't take it personal. It's a business. Just listen to ol' Eddie, and we'll increase your chances of finding suitable housing.

- First, consider seeking out landlords who manage smaller properties or rent private homes. Bam! That's the secret sauce. Keep it local and stay away from the big-business property management companies.
- Always, always, always be upfront about your situation with landlords. Transparency can help prevent future issues and may be necessary for

your parole officer to conduct home visits or communicate with them.

- Don't ignore the importance of a good credit score. You can check your score on www.annualcreditreport.com with one of the 3 credit reporting agencies: Equifax, TransUnion, or Experian (Note: you can only do this once per year with each agency).

Financial obligations when renting housing often include:

- paying a security deposit
- paying first and last month's rent
- paying an application fee

RESOURCES BY AREA

Temporary and Permanent Housing

BESSEMER

The Foundry Ministries

PO Box 824, Bessemer | (205) 424-4673

<https://foundryministries.com/>

The Foundry Ministries is a faith-based organization that offers housing and 9-month programs for individuals choosing to not use drugs and alcohol. There are separate women and men's center and programs, a farm for men to live and work on, and transitional housing available for women after completing the program.

BIRMINGHAM

Bridge Ministries

PO Box 55216, Birmingham | (205) 930-0309

<https://bridgeministriesbham.org/>

The Bridge Ministry is a faith-based organization that provides emergency assistance to families and individuals.

Brother Bryan Mission

1616 2nd Avenue North, Birmingham | (205) 322-0092

<https://bbmission.com/>

Brother Bryan Mission is a faith-based organization serving men that includes “The New Life Fellowship”, which is a 9-month recovery program, and “The Exodus Program”, where men can stay up to two years while maintaining employment.

Firehouse Ministries

626 2nd Avenue North, Birmingham | (205) 252-9571

<https://firehouseshelter.com/>

A faith-based shelter that serves unhoused men, providing daily meals, employment workshops, and a clothing closet. Day program also provides a shower, meal, and clean clothes. Permanent housing is also available.

Changed Lives Christian Center

1308 26th Avenue North, Birmingham | (205) 521-6421

<https://cl-cc.org/>

This is a faith-based organization in partnership with The Foundry Ministries, which offers transitional housing for men graduating from the Foundry Ministries recovery programs. They also offer transitional housing for men who are unhoused. This is a two-year program that provides a mailing address, medical and dental care, assistance in getting a Social Security card and/or a driver's license, and employment and financial workshops. Individuals are expected to pay rent and will maintain savings accounts.

Hannah Bethany Home

1615 Cullom Street South, Birmingham | (205) 930-0144

https://www.homelessshelterdirectory.org/shelter/al_hannah-bethany-home-womens-homeless-shelter

Shelter for women who are unhoused and their children. Participants must be willing to participate in programs and goal-setting.

Jimmie Hale Mission

3420 2nd Avenue North, Birmingham | (205) 323-5878

<https://jimmiehalemission.com/>

Jimmie Hale Mission is a faith-based organization that offers separate shelters for unhoused men and unhoused women and children. Services offered include a 15-week program that assists individuals

and families with dental and medical care, legal assistance, educational classes, and employment workshops. Participants are encouraged to remain living at the centers after completing the program and will continue to receive counseling and financial management coaching. Shelter locations include:

Shepura (Urban Campus for Men)

3420 2nd Avenue North, Birmingham | (205) 323-5878

Jessie’s Place (For Women and Children)

2305 5th Avenue North, Birmingham | (205) 323-0170

Royal Pines (Rural Campus for Men)

5 Guinns Cove Rd, Hayden | (256) 352-9444

The Lovelady Center

7916 2nd Ave S., Birmingham | (205) 833-7410

www.loveladycenter.org/

This is a faith-based organization designed for women returning home from prison and their children. It can also be an alternative program to sentencing for women.



PHOTO FROM GOOGLE

Salvation Army

2015 26th Avenue North, Birmingham | (205) 328-5656

<https://southernusa.salvationarmy.org/birmingham-al/contact-us/>

Salvation Army of Greater Birmingham serves men, women, children, families, and veterans at The Center of Hope and is the only shelter available in Central Alabama. Emergency services are available, including shelter, food, clothing, and counseling.

Shepherd's Fold, Inc.

507 Whitmore Dr., Birmingham | (205)780-6211

<https://shepherdsfold.org/>

Shepherd's Fold is a faith-based organization that provides men with a transitional home. They also provide assistance in obtaining identification, education, and employment.

YWCA of Central Alabama

309 23rd Street North, Birmingham | (205) 591-4302

<https://ywcabham.org/>

YWCA provides temporary and permanent housing and support for unhoused women, children, and families in Central Alabama. YWCA also offers case management and services ranging from childcare to job skills to protection from domestic abuse.

MONTGOMERY

Faith Crusade Montgomery Rescue Mission

17 Mildred Street, Montgomery | (334) 834-0551

www.fcmm.org/

Faith Crusade Montgomery Rescue Mission is a faith-based organization that provides shelter, clothes, and food within the Montgomery area.

Family Promise of Montgomery

28 Crenshaw Street, Montgomery | (334) 265-2010

www.familypromisemontgomery.org/

Family Promise of Montgomery provides various housing, meals, and transportation through a network of local congregations or churches.

Friendship Mission

312 Chisholm St., Montgomery | (334) 356-6412

www.friendshipmission.org/love/

Friendship Mission provides emergency housing, food, and basic needs for unhoused men, women, and children.

GENESIS House

660 Morgan Avenue, Montgomery | (334) 262-2245

<https://inmatemoms.org/programs/genesis-home/>

The GENESIS House, run by Aid to Inmate Mothers, provides housing for women who have just been recently released from prison. Programs include employment training and assistance with job placement upon completion of program.

Mary Ellen's Hearth

923 S. Perry Street, Montgomery | (800) 239-3575

www.maryellenshearth.org/

Mary Ellen's Hearth is a faith-based organization in affiliation with Embrace Alabama Kids. The organization helps to provide housing, care, and education for women and their children.

Vision of Grace Transition Home

(334) 669-0600 or (310) 925-0801

<https://visionofgracetransitionhome.org/>

Visions of Grace Transition Home offers housing to unhoused families, with the goal of obtaining permanent housing.



PHOTO FROM GOOGLE

Public Housing

BIRMINGHAM

Housing Authority

1826 3rd Ave. S, Birmingham | (205) 324-0641

<https://habd.org/>

Housing Authority Birmingham District offers information on affordable housing, emergency housing and payment assistance.

MONTGOMERY

Montgomery Housing Authority

525 South Lawrence St., Montgomery | (334) 206-7200

<https://mhatoday.org/>

The Montgomery Housing Authority offers affordable housing in the Montgomery area.

Veterans Only

Assistance and Housing

BIRMINGHAM

Priority Veteran Birmingham

3600 8th Avenue South, Birmingham | (866) 460-3827

www.priorityveteran.org/

Priority Veteran partners with United Way of Central Alabama to provide assistance for veterans and their families. Services include location of stable housing, employment workshops, and access to medical and mental health services. Outside of Birmingham, Priority Veteran has offices in Dothan, Huntsville, Montgomery, Tuscaloosa, and Pensacola. Visit their website for details.

Three Hots & a Cot

2124 Old Springville Road, Center Point, Birmingham | (205) 520-2356

www.cotsforvets.org/

Three Hots & a Cot provides assistance to veterans as they transition back into society. Food and utility assistance, as well as housing, are available.

SECTION NOTES

SECTION 3

Employment

HI, I AM DENA! Let me start by saying, “Welcome home” to some of you, and to others, we are anticipating your return! At this point you are planning your transition or implementing the plans you had prior to your release.



There are some things that can’t be overlooked and that are vital to your movement forward. Yes, thoughts of coming home for many start with, “Man, I am going to get out of here and get me a **job.**”

Know that you aren’t alone, and that many have been where you are right now, at an entryway to being gainfully employed or starting a career. I have been there myself, starting life a bit later than anticipated. And the world is new, as will be your approach to it. So there are things to be anxious about. **No one’s exit is the same.** Some have been gone for a very long time, decades even, and others are — as I have heard it stated — “a short timer,” in-and-out, haven’t missed much of day-to-day changes in the world. However you hit the ground, let the anxiousness fuel you.

I think it goes without saying that financial stability is one of your top priorities. The means and ways to achieve that can be challenging.

Before we start though, know that you will hear terms connected to employment in the job market like:

1. Networking
2. Job application forms
3. Online applications
4. Resume / Cover letter
5. References
6. Researching the company
7. Interview + practice beforehand
8. Clothing / presentation
9. Addressing your record

Networking

What you know is a good place to start, but **who** you know still works today. Ask around for job leads, starting with:

- Friends
- Family
- Former employers
- People you know from inside

There are also opportunities for professional networking at:

- Community events
- Re-entry forums
- Second chance job fairs
- And of course, CERC!

There will be re-entry events, socials, symposiums, and seminars for educating the community on the need for community involvement and support for the formerly incarcerated individual. Connect with others who have experienced what you are going through. They can serve to be a great source of information. Stay connected to your re-entry network.

Job Application Forms

Job searching and applying has changed tremendously from when I first started. Depending on how old you are, you may remember walking into an establishment asking if they were hiring, possibly filling out a **paper application** or even starting on the spot. You may even have had someone that referred you to a place and all you had to do was show up. Well, today it is indeed a bit different. Technology has expanded the world in a way that is unimaginable until you find yourselves in it.

Let's move you away from the paper and to the internet and the online application process.

Online application

Basically, online applying is using your phone, tablet, or computer to fill out a digital form with the same info you'd write on a paper application. The employer can review it and make the decision on how to proceed: deny the application, or give you a chance to **interview** for the job. If you need help with technology, look ahead at the "Technology and Communication" chapter in section 7 of this guide.

Resume | Cover Letter

A resume is a document that has relevant information about your education, work, and volunteer experience as well as any other accomplishments, special certifications, or awards that you may have received.

The cover letter is what will accompany the resume. It is used to introduce yourself and explain why you should be considered a candidate for the position (see the next page for an example).

| COVER LETTER EXAMPLE |

[Your Name]

[Your Address]
[City, State, ZIP Code]
[Your Email Address]
[Your Phone Number]

[Today's Date]

[Employer's Name]
[Company Name]
[Company Address]
[City, State, ZIP Code]

Dear [Employer's Name],

I am writing to express my sincere interest in the [Job Title] position at [Company Name], as advertised on [where you found the job posting]. With a strong background in [relevant skills and experience], I am confident in my ability to contribute effectively to your team and help [Company Name] achieve its goals.

Throughout my career, I have honed my skills in [mention specific skills relevant to the job], enabling me to [give examples of achievements or projects that showcase your expertise]. My commitment to excellence, coupled with my passion for [industry or field], makes me an ideal candidate for this role.

One of my key strengths is my ability to [mention a unique skill or quality that sets you apart], which I believe will be particularly valuable in the dynamic environment at [Company Name]. I am a highly adaptable individual who thrives in fast-paced settings and is eager to contribute my [specific skills] to drive innovation and success within your team.

I am drawn to [Company Name] because of its reputation for [mention a positive aspect of the company, such as innovation, commitment to excellence, etc.]. I am excited about the opportunity to be a part of a company that values [mention a company value or characteristic] and offers a stimulating work environment.

Enclosed is my resume, which provides further details about my professional background. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss how my skills and experiences align with the needs of [Company Name]. I am available at your earliest convenience for an interview and can be reached via email at [Your Email Address] or by phone at [Your Phone Number].

Thank you for considering my application. I am enthusiastic about the prospect of contributing to the success of [Company Name] and am eager to bring my skills to your esteemed organization. I look forward to the possibility of discussing my candidacy further.

Sincerely,
[Your Signature]



References

References aren't always necessary, but they can enhance your chances to gain employment. References may be something that employers will ask of you after a positive interview. Start with 3 people that can speak positively about your character and professional experience. Avoid using family members as references if you can.

Researching the Company

You should know as much as you can about the company that you are applying for. It shows the employer that you have done your homework and can be viewed as your first investment into the company, preceding your hard work. It also helps with the conversational component of the interview and can ease the nervousness.

Interview + Practice Beforehand

Many are nervous when meeting or speaking with strangers. There are some things you can do that might help with the nervousness:

- There are great job training and preparation programs out there called **workforce development** that can help you navigate through this vital process; enroll in one!
- Find a friend or colleague willing to **do mock interviews** with you, look over your application and cover letter, and critique/give you helpful feedback (We can help with this if you visit CERC).
- Take deep breaths before going in for your interview.

Clothing / Presentation

Always try to put your best foot forward. **Appearance and first impressions are the lasting impression.**

Many have stated that you can dress to the job: for a construction job, have on work boots. For an office job, wear something business casual (collared shirt with a tie, simple dress, nothing tight or revealing). **ALWAYS** dress to impress.

If you don't have anything, maybe a family member/friend can loan you something. Thrift stores can have affordable clothing items, and some-

times local churches or re-entry programs can provide clothing for free.

Posture and body language say a lot! Practice in a mirror and remember to **smile!**

Addressing Your Record

Anxiety and fear of the interview process are normal. The anxiety heightens when we look at the possibility of having to rehash our past. “Why do I have to do this? I know I won’t get it if that happens,” — all of those statements may be running through your head.

- Remember being honest is key, as is taking responsibility for your choices. Turning the negative experience into a positive is a way to show accountability, showing what you did with your time and what incarceration changed about you are also ways to lighten the negative effects and thoughts that come with the bias.
- Focus on skills/strengths. This nugget was given to me many years ago: “**I may have done what they claim I did, but I am not who they claim me to be.**” Let’s move on. Look at your strengths. Someone can help you craft your resume and coach you in your responses using your resume.

You can use the **work opportunity tax credit** as leverage to the employer on the benefits of hiring you, which won’t be limited to you being a great worker.

Other Tips

Community Education Resource Center (CERC)

If you run into an issue, draw a blank, and just can't seem to get a grip on it, please call CERC (659) 214-9329 or drop by at 131 41st Street South, Birmingham, AL 35222 and let them know you need assistance. **If you're overwhelmed, that's ok.** You can make an appointment to speak with a support specialist who have the lived experience of incarceration and would love to assist as best they can.

Chambers of Commerce

Even though a chamber of commerce is for the local businesses community, it is also a resource that can be used to look for career opportunities.

Community Colleges

Training and certificate programs can help you with skill sets and job placement services. They have workforce education/development opportunities tied to fast-track training programs. You may be able to go in and speak with an advisor.

RESOURCES BY AREA

Temporary and Permanent Employment Agencies

County Office

www.countyoffice.org/

This website supplies information such as offices, addresses, phone numbers, and websites about government offices and public records around the nation.

BIRMINGHAM

ADW Temporary Staffing

5522 1st Ave N, Birmingham | (205) 283-3446

<https://adwtemporarystaffing.com/>

ADW is a temporary staffing agency assisting individuals with temporary to permanent employment opportunities.

Marathon Staffing

1551 Sterilite Dr., Birmingham | (205) 854-0026

www.marathonstaffing.com/birmingham/

Marathon Staffing helps individuals find employment opportunities.

Onin Staffing

3800 Colonnade Pkwy Suite 300 | (866) 581-6646

www.oninstaffing.com/

Onin Staffing assists individuals with employment opportunities.

People Ready

2501 3rd Avenue S., Birmingham | (205) 324-5277

www.peopleready.com/location/birmingham-al-1326/

Staffing organization that connects workers and employers with seasonal jobs, permanent positions, and skilled labor employment.

Snelling

1 Independence Plaza #702, Birmingham

(205) 879-9950

<https://birmingham.snelling.com/>

Snelling matches job seekers with job opportunities.

MONTGOMERY

Alabama Department of Labor

649 Monroe Street, Montgomery | (334) 309-9000

<https://labor.alabama.gov/>

This website supplies information about the 57 career centers located around the state of Alabama. These career centers offer a multitude of educational and job readiness skills workshops and programs.

Central Alabama Works, Montgomery

401 Adams Avenue, Montgomery | (334) 280-4400

<https://alabamaworks.com/>

Alabama Works assists individuals with educational and employment opportunities.

Match Staffing

3001 Zelda Rd., Suite 100, Montgomery | (334) 270-0100

www.matchstaffing.com/

Match Staffing helps to match individuals with job opportunities.

People Ready

134 High Street, Montgomery | (334) 263-5627

Email: 1328-br@peopleready.com

www.peopleready.com/location/montgomery-al-1328/

Staffing organization that connects workers and employers with seasonal jobs, permanent positions, and skilled labor employment.

Spherion

4165 Carmichael Road, Montgomery | (334) 859-1104

www.spherion.com/our-offices/montgomery_1211/

Spherion assists individuals looking for temporary and permanent employment opportunities. Additional offices can be found in Vestavia Hills, Mobile, and Huntsville. Visit www.spherion.com/our-offices/q-montgomery/r-alabama/ for details.

SECTION NOTES

SECTION 4

Education

HI EVERYONE! THIS IS TAMMY, and we are going to talk about education! Education can mean something different to everyone and can happen at so many different times in your life. Whether you are interested in obtaining your general education development (GED), taking some classes to work in a particular industry, or attending college, we have some information in this section that can start you on this journey. Remember that it doesn't matter where you have been or how old you are, everyone should have access to education!



While you were incarcerated you might have had the opportunity to take some educational courses or classes, and those will help you now that you are out. Some of these programs might include:

- ABE or Adult Basic Education
- GED or General Education Development
- Trade, Vocational, or Apprenticeship Programs
- Community Education Classes
- Higher Education in Prison or College Credit Classes

All of these courses or programs are a great way to start your educational journey and can usually be continued once you leave prison.

Adult Basic Education (ABE)

Adult Basic Education classes are a great place to get started when trying to further your education. Whether you need to get assistance to take a test for a certificate, or are touching up some skills when looking for a job, these kind of classes can be found in libraries, community college campuses, or resource centers around the area. Some classes that might be offered include writing, reading, listening, and public speaking. You might have to make an appointment or talk to someone about when programs are offered. Listed below are a couple of resources we found that might be helpful.

Alabama Community College System

135 South Union Street, Montgomery | (334) 293-4500

<https://aed.cc.al.us/AAESAPWeb/Pages/Public/InsertPublicEnrollment.aspx>

Alabama Community College System offers adult educational classes and workshops.

Community Education Resource Center (CERC)

131 41st St., Birmingham | (659) 214-9329

<https://apaep.auburn.edu/programs/cerc.php>

CERC provides educational support and resources for people who are system-impacted. Located in Birmingham, CERC recognizes the diverse and intersectional challenges involved in re-entry, and we partner with local community organizations to bring classes that are tailored to student needs. Crucial to the development of our community is elevating the voices of those with experience of incarceration and involving them in identifying strategies to build a strong foundation and network for personal and communal success. We build pathways through education!



General Education Development (GED)

Did you miss out on getting your high school diploma for some reason? Well, you are in luck! A general education development, or GED, is the same thing! Maybe you started taking some classes or studying for your GED while you were in prison, so now is a great time to finish. Plus, the majority of businesses will require that you have your diploma or GED to gain employment. In order to obtain your GED, you will need to take some tests and you might have to study a little to pass these. Libraries, community colleges, and resource centers are great places to visit and will normally have information on how to get your GED. Some great places in your area to get more informa-

tion on obtaining your GED are:

Alabama Community College System

135 South Union Street, Montgomery | (334) 293-4500

www.accs.edu/adulteducation/ged/

Alabama Community College System offers pre-GED classes and GED testing centers.

GED Testing Service

www.ged.com/

This website gives you information on what tests you need to take to obtain your GED and also gives you locations in your area and where to get more information.

M-POWER Ministries

4022 4th Ave. S., Birmingham | (205) 595-5959

www.mpowerministries.org/education-center/

M-Power Ministries is a faith-based organization that offers educational and employment workshops. Pre-GED classes and GED testing are available along with one-on-one tutoring services.



Vocational, Trade, Certificate, and Apprenticeship Programs

These kinds of programs will give you skills that you need within a certain industry, job, or trade. For example, if you want to operate heavy equipment, you will need to attend a program that will give you the resources and trainings you need to be employed to operate heavy equipment. Sometimes you can even work as an apprentice to someone who works within the industry you want to work in. This means you would work alongside a professional and they will teach you what you need to know to get a job in the same industry. Here are some places we found that will have information on getting involved in these programs:

ADAMSVILLE

New Path Health Career Center

3385 Main Street, Adamsville | (205) 593-4592

www.newpathhcc.com/

New Path Health Career Center offers certified nursing assistant and phlebotomy technician programs.

BIRMINGHAM

Alabama Workforce Training Center

2244 Rocky Ridge Rd., Birmingham | (205) 719-3220

<https://awtc.aidt.edu/>

Offers free training for existing Alabama employees who wish to advance their skills in construction, manufacturing, and general workforce skills. Some free training is also available to the general public, including forklift training, basic residential carpentry, OSHA, basic electrical, and other entry-level opportunities.

Birmingham Urban League

2101 6th Avenue N, Suite 700, Birmingham | (205) 326-0162

<https://birminghamul.org/>

Workshops and trainings are provided and are meant to allow individuals to stay employed with job readiness, life skills, and educational programs.

The Dannon Project (Prison Re-entry Support Services)

2324 5th Avenue North, Birmingham | (205) 202-4072

<https://dannonproject.org/>

Organization that works with youth and individuals who are reentering society after incarceration. They offer a case management system and extensive referral network that can work with people 6 months prior to release. There are also offices in Tuscaloosa and Thomasville. Visit their website for details.

M-POWER Ministries

4022 4th Ave. S., Birmingham | (205) 595-5959

www.mpowerministries.org/education-center/

M-Power Ministries is a faith-based organization that offers educational and employment workshops.

Salvation Army Education and Workforce Development Center

2015 26th Avenue North, Birmingham | (205) 328-2420

<https://southernusa.salvationarmy.org/birmingham-al/educate-and-train>

The Salvation Army offers trainings, classes, and workshops for resumes, cover letters, and interview skills.

MOBILE

AIDT (Alabama Industrial Development Training) Training Center

360 Addscro Road, Mobile | (251) 405-8698

<https://maritime.aidt.edu/>

Offers free training for existing Alabama employees who wish to

advance their skills in construction, manufacturing, and general workforce skills. Some free training is also available to the general public, including forklift training, basic residential carpentry, OSHA, basic electrical, and other entry-level opportunities.

MONTGOMERY

A Cut Above the Rest

1601 Dewey St, Montgomery | (205) 718-2239

<https://acartf.com/>

Nonprofit organization providing hands-on heavy equipment and commercial lawn training for individuals who have felony convictions on their permanent records. There are also locations in Mobile, Huntsville, Birmingham, Colbert County, and Tuscaloosa. Visit their website for details.

Agape CDL Training

4204 Selma Highway Suite 107, Montgomery | (334) 676-4030

<https://agapecdltraining.com/>

Agape CDL Training provides commercial driver's license, freight broker, and dispatch training.

Alabama Community College System

135 South Union Street, Montgomery | (334) 293-4500

www.accs.edu/

Alabama Community College System offers various associates degrees, employment training, and career path assistance.

Easter Seals Central Alabama

2185 Normandie Drive, Montgomery | (334) 288-0240

<https://eastersealscentralalabama.org/>

Referral-only program, must be referred by the Alabama Department of Rehab Services (ADRS). Call ADRS at (800) 441-7607 for more information on how to get involved.

Goodwill Industries of Central Alabama, Inc.

900 Air Base Boulevard, Montgomery | (334) 263-4633

<http://algoodwill.org/>

Referrals for job training and placement come primarily from The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS). Call ADRS at (800) 441-7607 for more information on how to get involved.

Heritage Training and Career Center

2249 Cong. W.L Dickinson Drive, Montgomery | (334) 260-6161

www.heritagetcc.com/

Provides training for low-income individuals who do not have the skills necessary to have economic independence. Instructors assist in filling out job applications, resumes, interview skills, and job referrals.

Power Up

1634-A Montgomery Hwy #195 | (833) 769-3711

www.poweruploud.org/

Power Up offers construction training for women.

Looking for other options?

These websites give general information on educational programs and vocational schools in Alabama:

<https://accreditedschoolsonline.org/vocational-trade-school/alabama/>

<https://careerschoolnow.org/colleges/states/alabama>

Higher Education

At some point you might decide that you want to change careers or do something different, and this might require taking some classes or getting a degree at a community college or university. Maybe you started to take some college classes in prison and now you are ready to get your degree. Below is some information that will be helpful in deciding if a community college or a 4-year university will work the best for you.

Community College

Community college is a great way to gain an associate's degree or a way to start the process of earning your bachelor's or graduate degree. An associate's degree usually takes 2 to 3 years, and some of the benefits of community college are:

- less expensive classes
- online and evening classes
- smaller class sizes



Community colleges will also have more resources available for individuals who are not traditional college students. Professors, advisors, staff, and counselors are better trained to assist students who have more complex lives outside of college. This could include individuals:

- who have families
- are working a full-time job
- have been incarcerated
- are veterans
- are first-generation, or whose parents never went to college
- any other non-traditional status

When you take classes at a community college, all the qualifying credit classes you earned will transfer over to a 4-year college. If you took higher

education in prison classes while you were incarcerated, those credits you earned should also transfer to the college you choose to attend.

Certificate and licensing programs are usually available at a local community college and will take less time to obtain. Internships will often be available and can lead to employment in the industry you desire. Here are a couple community colleges we found in the area:

Jefferson State Community College

2601 Carson Road, Birmingham | (888)453-3378

www.jeffersonstate.edu/

This college offers an assortment of classes and programs, from welding to medical courses. There are also campuses for Shelby-Hoover, St. Clair-Pell City, and Chilton-Clanton. Visit their website for details.

Lawson State Community College

1100 Ninth Avenue, SW, Bessemer | (205) 925-2515

3060 Wilson Road, SW, Birmingham | (205) 925-2515

www.lawsonstate.edu/

These colleges offer an assortment of classes and programs, from medical to cooking to mechanic courses.

For a list of all community colleges in Alabama, visit this website:

www.accs.edu/community-college/find-college/

You will need to call and talk to a counselor or advisor to get more information about any of these colleges. *More information on that process can be found later in this section.*

4-Year College or University

A 4-year college or university will typically be required for individuals wanting to obtain a bachelor's degree. Some universities will have special programs designed to make transferring from a community college easier.

So now that you have decided to go to college, there are a few steps that you will need to follow to get enrolled and to get your financing arranged. You will have to first apply to go to the college of your choice. Many college applications are available online. If you need help filling out the application, many libraries and resource centers in your area should have someone who can help you with this. The college campus might also have individuals available who can guide you through the application process. They are called advisors, counselors, or even navigators.

It's best to call the college's admissions office to find out what you need to bring in to apply, but you can expect to need:

- your state identification card or driver's license
- social security card
- high school diploma or GED transcript
- any previous college transcripts

Some colleges will charge a fee to apply, but those fees can sometimes be waived or provided by a resource center.

Background checks will also be done when you apply, so don't be surprised if they ask about your history or past. Don't let this discourage you from applying; **you have every right to be there and to further your education.**

Once you have completed the application you will need to wait to find out if you were accepted. This generally doesn't take too long, but depending on the time of year, might take a little bit of time. If you have a felony on your record, they might ask you for some additional information. Again, don't let this discourage you. If you get denied, ask

if there is an appeal process you can go through to find out why or if you have the opportunity to speak with someone about their final decision.

Now that you have been accepted to college, you will need to work out how you will pay for this. If you have been working with an admissions counselor to apply, they will have information on funding or tuition and will probably direct you to the financial aid office. There are numerous ways to pay for college including private funds, Pell Grants, student loans, and scholarships. There are some colleges that offer free college, and this might help you decide where you want to take classes.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

FAFSA forms are generally filled out online, and there should be resources on the campus that help guide you through this process. FAFSA forms can be found at <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>. You can also request a paper copy by calling 1-800-433-3243. The financial aid office on your campus should also be able to help you when filling out these forms.

Since you have been accepted to attend college, you should be given access to their student portal, which is a space that will have so much information for you. More information about scholarships and financial aid will be available on the student portal. If you need a place to use the internet and fill out the forms, the campus or your community libraries are a great place to get this done. The sooner you get your FAFSA forms completed, the better the chance you have to get **Pell grants** and information on how soon your funding will be available.

Additional costs to consider:

- **Textbooks.** These will be required for each class, and they can be purchased new or used and are sometimes available at the campus library.
- **A personal laptop/computer.** Most classes will require you to use one for the majority of your work.
- **Internet access.** You will need it to communicate with instructors or access online resources.

Listed below are some other resources that will help as you start your college journey ...



STUDENT EMAIL AND LOGIN INFORMATION

You will be issued a student email and login information once you are accepted in the college of your choice. Your email will be used throughout your college career and will be how your professors, other students, and other spaces on campus will get messages to you. Be sure to check this often; there will be a lot of information sent to you! Your login information will give you access to your student account or portal. This will contain a lot of the information you need to be successful as a student.

OFFICE HOURS AND SYLLABI

Faculty/professors will have office hours available during the semester.

These are great ways to find out more details on what expectations they have for their class and to get any additional information or help from your faculty/professor. Each professor or faculty member will have a syllabus for their classes. These syllabi will have rules for the class, attendance requirements, grading and assignment details, and many other aspects of the class.



CAMPUS OR STUDENT IDS

A campus ID or identification card is something you will be issued prior to starting classes. This ID will be used to get into various places on campus and might be used to access public transportation.

In addition, there are so many other places for students to succeed on both community and 4-year college campus. These resources are included in the costs of your classes and are available while you are a student.



TUTORING CENTERS

Many college campuses offer free tutoring to their students. These centers usually cover all subjects and will be available for as long as you need them. You typically have to make an appointment in order to get assistance.



WRITING CENTERS

A writing center is a place on campus where you can get help improving your writing skills. They offer editing, tutoring, workshops, and many other services.



MENTORING PROGRAMS

A mentoring program can be beneficial because the students involved will often have the same life experiences as the students needing a mentor. Mentors will be able to come alongside you as you register for classes, talk to financial aid, and use other resources on campus.

OFFICES OF ACCESSIBILITY

Every campus has an office that supports students in need of accommodation. If you have a disability or think you might have a disability, this is a valuable resource for you.



CAREER CENTER

A career center is not only a great way to get help finding a job once you earn your degree; they can also assist in employment while you are still taking classes.



OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE OR ACTIVITIES

These offices will have information on so many of the resources available on campus. This could include ...

- Student government
- Clubs | organizations
- Cultural and resource centers
- Food Pantries



STUDENT HEALTH CENTER

Health centers on campus often provide students access to vaccinations and other health-related resources. Most types of insurance are usually accepted.



COUNSELING / THERAPY

The majority of college campuses have counseling and therapy available for students for free or discounted rates. These options are in the form of one-on-one or group sessions and can be virtual or in-person.





LIBRARIES

Libraries on college campuses are a great place to study and do group work, and provide many resources to students, including:

- Resource materials and books
- Textbooks available for checkout
- Desktop computers for use
- Printing and copy machine services
- Laptops available for checkout

TRANSPORTATION

Most campuses have a bus or form of public transportation available for students to use while on campus and are usually free or at a discounted price.



GYMS AND RECREATIONAL CENTERS

Most campuses have gyms and rec centers available for students to use while earning their degree.



HOUSING AND DINING HALLS

Dining halls on campus have food available either through a semester pass or individual meal purchases. Housing is sometimes available to students on campus, but there might be restrictions on who can live there based on a background check.



Most of all, don't forget that you have a right to this education and DON'T LET ANYONE TELL YOU DIFFERENT. Good Luck!

SECTION NOTES

SECTION 5

Transportation

IT'S DENA AGAIN! Oh goodness, we will have lots to talk about. Yes, here we are with needs, plans, and goals, trying to see the path forward clearly. Well, that is an impossible task—life happens, as we all know—so at best, we lay things out and prepare for readjustments when necessary.



When thinking about becoming gainfully employed, we ask, “Where do we want to work, and how do we get there?” Transportation—we have to have it. Speaking of which, that is what we are going to explore; various forms of transportation.

How will you get to the places that you need to go? Everyone has different options:

- Public Transportation (the bus)
- Bike
- Walk
- Personal vehicle
- Lyft, Uber, or a taxi
- Help from friends/family

Yes, some people returning home will have family and friends with a vehicle who will make themselves available. However, disappointments come mainly due to conflicting schedules and unforeseen circumstances, when they can't be available. What will your alterna-

tive transportation be if that happens or you yourself do not have your own vehicle? Plan B, what other options do you have? Most transportation will cost you something. The cost will vary depending on what form of transportation you will use. Let's go back to the list above and look at some realistic options.

Public Transportation

Public transportation, also known as the city bus or transit, is one option. You can buy a ticket called a bus pass to take the bus. They come in the form of daily and monthly passes. You do not have to have identification to purchase a pass unless you are buying a discount pass for students, seniors, persons with disabilities, and or military. Please take note that they pick up and drop off in a limited area around the city. You will need to check with the station to see if the bus goes to the area in which you are traveling to and the times of pick up and drop off.

Birmingham

Max Transit | (205) 521-0101

<https://maxtransit.org/>

Monday to Friday 5:30am – 9:00pm; Saturday 6:00am – 9:00pm

Central Station:

1700 Morris Avenue, Birmingham, AL 35203

Huntsville

Orbit Huntsville Transit | (256) 427-6811

www.huntsvilleal.gov/residents/streets/public-transportation/orbit/

Monday to Friday 6:00am – 9:00pm; Saturday 7:00am – 7:00pm

Public Transit Office:

500 B Church Street, Huntsville, AL 35801

Mobile

The Wave Transit System | (251) 344-6600

www.thewavetransit.com/

Monday to Friday 6:00am – 7:00pm; Saturday 7:00 am – 7:00pm

GM&O Transit Center:

110 Beauregard Street, Suite 104, Mobile, AL 36602

Montgomery

The M Transit – (334) 262-7356

<https://themtransit.com/>

Monday to Friday 5:30am – 9:00pm; Saturday 7:30am – 6:30pm

Downtown Transfer Center:

495 Molton Street, Montgomery, AL 36104

Tuscaloosa

Tuscaloosa Transit Authority – (205) 343-2300

<http://www.tuscaloosatransit.com/>

Monday to Friday 5:00am – 6:00pm; Saturday 7:00am – 2:00pm

The 4:00 p.m. run is the last route that you can catch to transfer from one bus to another at the main terminal

TTA Office: 601 23rd Avenue, Tuscaloosa, AL 35401

Taxi/Cab

Like everything else that has changed due to the technological boom, the cab business is becoming obsolete, and it looks different. For instance, in Birmingham there is a service called **zTrip** (www.ztrip.com/birmingham/) that used to be Yellow Cab. You do not have to have the app to use it nor a smartphone. You can call (205) 222-2222 and choose a vehicle that meets your needs. Let them know if you will need accommodations for a wheelchair, bicycle, etc.

Bicycle

Bikes are great. If you are traveling within a comfortable distance (as far as you feel you can ride round-trip), then they are indeed cost-efficient, and great for your health and wellness. A bike can be used with other forms of transportation as well. This means if you have to go to a place that the bus doesn't quite go to, but can get you fairly close, then you can put your bike on the bus, and when you get to the final stop, you can bike the rest of the way.

Lyft or Uber

The pandemic allowed for us to become very creative, very fast, in my opinion. These are the newest ways people have been getting around. It's quick, efficient, and works 24/7. Here you have to download the app (Lyft and Uber are separate companies with different apps). There are many nice features that come with this form of transportation:

- You can see your driver's profile before pickup
- You can track where your driver is and how far away from you
- You can choose the type and size of the vehicle
- You can pay with a debit/credit card.

Your personal vehicle

Before operating a vehicle legally, you will need:

- Vehicle registration
- Insurance
(there are many kinds of coverage, but Liability is required)
- Driver's License

Please check with your local DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles) to see if your license is still in good standing, hasn't been revoked or suspended.

You can find more information here: www.alea.gov/dps/driver-license/driver-license-information

Friend/Family

You may have family members and friends that are excited that you have finally made it home, and hopefully they have committed to being a part of your re-entry support team. They will most likely be available to take you to the probation office for reporting, doctor visits, and other important appointments pertaining to our exit and forward progress.

However, we must look at the workarounds that this may call for. Things come up, such as car repairs and conflicting schedules. You will definitely have to be prepared to have alternative solutions to transportation issues. Please refer to the list above.

SECTION NOTES

SECTION 6

Medical & Mental Health

HELLO, THIS IS ROB! Keeping up with your physical and mental well-being is very, very important, especially as you work to secure housing, employment, and other needs. You don't want to let a cough turn into something worse, so this section will provide you with resources for addressing any current or future health conditions. As the saying goes, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Try to get a plan in place before you get sick!



Finding out how to navigate health insurance can be unbelievably confusing, too—at least when you first are starting out. However, there is one option that may help you get started, and that is getting enrolled in Medicaid. Medicaid is a government health insurance program designed for low-income families and individuals. Depending on your situation, some services may be free or at a lower cost. For more information and eligibility requirements, please visit <https://medicaid.alabama.gov/>, which covers Alabama.

Alabama Regional Medical Services (ARMS)

(205) 407-5600

<https://alabamaarms.org/>

ARMS is a non-profit health organization that focuses on providing services to disadvantaged populations. The website provides various medical information including locations, services, and resources.

Jefferson County Health Department

1400 Sixth Avenue South, Birmingham

<https://www.jcdh.org/>

This website provides information about various medical, mental, and dental health services, locations, and hours of operation.

UAB Medicine

500 22nd Street South, Birmingham | (800) 822-8816

www.uabmedicine.org/

UAB Medicine is a network of hospitals, emergency rooms, and specialists; visit their website for more details.

BIRMINGHAM

Cahaba Medical Care

405 Belcher St, Centreville | (205) 926-2992

<https://cahabamedicalcare.com/>

Cahaba Medical Care provides a variety of medical and mental health services. Additional locations are in Woodstock, Bessemer, Maplesville, Marion, Fairfield, Brent, West Blocton, Camden, Alabaster, and Birmingham. Visit their website for more details.

Christ Health Center

5720 First Avenue South, Birmingham | (205) 380-9455

<https://christhealthcenter.org/>

Christ Health Center is a faith-based health center offering medical, mental, and dental health services.

Cooper Green Mercy Hospital

1515 6th Ave. S, Birmingham | (205) 930-3200

<https://coopergreen.org/>

Cooper Green Mercy offers a variety of medical and mental health services.

Equal Access Birmingham | Heersink School of Medicine

930 20th Street South, Birmingham | (205) 259-8836

www.uab.edu/medicine/eab/

Equal Access Birmingham (EAB) is a free clinic run by students that provides medical care.

Jefferson-Blount-St. Clair Mental Health

Authority Residential Programs

940 Montclair Road Suite 200, Birmingham | (205) 595-4555

<https://jbsmentalhealth.com/>

JBS Mental Health Authority provides mental health services to youth and adults.

M-POWER Ministries

4022 4th Ave. S., Birmingham | (205) 595-5959

www.mpowerministries.org/health-center/

M-Power Ministries is a faith-based organization that provides free primary healthcare services to individuals who don't have health insurance.

MONTGOMERY

Carastar Health

2140 Upper Wetumpka Road, Montgomery | (800) 408-4197

24 Hour Number | (334) 279-7830

Deaf-Interpreter TTY and Voice | (334) 271-2855

www.carastar.org/

Carastar provides mental health support for individuals in Montgomery, Autauga, Elmore, and Lowndes counties.

EJI Health Clinic

421 St. Luke's Drive, Montgomery | (334) 239-9740

<https://eji.org/projects/health-care/>

The Equal Justice Initiative opened a health clinic to offer services to people post-incarceration at no cost. There is also a mobile clinic that travels to underserved areas of Alabama.

Dental

BESSEMER

Foundry Dental Center

1700 Sixth Avenue North, Bessemer | (205) 434-2031

<https://foundrydentalcenter.com/>

Foundry Dental Center provides low-cost dental services.

BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham Dental

1021 19th St. S, Birmingham | (205) 324-1323

<https://birminghamdental.com/>

Birmingham Dental provides a variety of dental care.

Christ Health Center

5720 First Ave. South, Birmingham | (205) 380-9455

<https://christhealthcenter.org/dental-treatment/>

Christ Health Center is a faith-based dental health center, providing care for children and adults. Treatment plans are available.

Eye Care

The University of Alabama at Birmingham

1716 University Blvd., Birmingham | (205) 975-2020

www.uab.edu/optometry/home/uab-eye-care

The UAB School of Optometry has a Community Eye Care program

that offers services to lower income, underinsured, or uninsured Alabamians. They also have an annual Gift of Sight event (usually for a few days in December) where you can get a free eye exam and glasses. Visit their website or call by phone for more details.

Prescription Services

Medicaid | Patient Assistance Programs

https://medicaid.alabama.gov/documents/4.0_Programs/4.3_Pharmacy-DME/4.3.13_Contacts_Links/4.3.13_Patient_Assistance_Programs_1-18-24.pdf

This link contains a list of different programs/organizations that offer help in getting free or discounted prescription medications. You do not necessarily need to be enrolled in Medicaid to qualify for services.

Alabama Department of Senior Services

201 Monroe Street, Suite 350, Montgomery, AL | (877) 425-2243

<https://alabamaageline.gov/seniorx/>

Even if you are not a senior citizen, you may still be eligible for free or reduced-cost prescription medications. Visit their website for a full list of qualifying conditions.

SECTION NOTES

SECTION 7

Technology & Communication

HI, ROB AGAIN. I've always been a bit of a nerd — which is to say I like learning about the world around me. These days, technology is all around us. And it's always changing! You might feel overwhelmed trying to figure it all out. Even nerds feel overwhelmed from time to time, but I can tell you the best thing is to take it one step at a time. You don't have to know everything. But in this section, I'll do my best to give you the bare bones of what you need to know. If you have questions, let us know! You can always give us a call at CERC: (659) 214-9329.



The Internet

Using the internet is like getting in a car and driving to wherever you want. You can shop for clothes, communicate with friends, find out about current events, and look for any number of services (like health-care, housing, employment, etc.). Some services and information can **only** be found on the internet (or “online” as it’s also known), so it’s useful to learn what you can about it!

Google

Google is the most-used way of searching for information online. Unsure about something? Google it! You'll get a million answers, but usually only the first 10 results will be helpful.

Email

If you learn/get one thing from this section, focus on getting your own email address! You will need one for almost **everything** – it is similar to getting your own P.O. Box for regular mail. It is the primary way people online can get in touch with you. There are many email services out there (almost all are free), but I'll just talk about two here:

Gmail

Google Mail (but everyone calls it gmail) is incredibly common and used by over a billion people, and it is free to sign up – you can do it here: www.google.com/gmail/about/ by clicking “Create an account”. However, you will need a phone number!

Protonmail

If you don't have a phone yet, try Protonmail, which is another free email service that doesn't require a phone number as part of account creation. Visit <https://proton.me/mail> to find out more.

Privacy & Security

When you are creating an account online, you will want to keep it secure so that nobody else can access it without your permission. Think of it like a big padlock safeguarding your information. Below are some types of keys:

Passwords

People can guess simple passwords, and programs can check millions of words at a time (like running through every word in a dictionary), so you will want a hard-to-guess word. Using numbers, symbols, and capital letters make it harder for others to figure out. But make sure you can remember it!

Passphrases

Similar to passwords, but longer (and thus harder to crack open)! For example, instead of “picKLe\$!” as a password, you could use “icannothave_enoughpickles!” which would be very difficult for anyone to guess. Phrases (like from a favorite song or quote) can also be easier to remember.

2FA

This means “two-factor authorization” and adds an extra layer of security (think two padlocks!). Basically, after you enter your password, the website will send a text/call/notification to your phone, and you will have to authorize access there too. If you use 2FA, then any hacker would need both your password/phrase and your phone in order to get access.

Storage

In the old days, files that were important to you (certificates, letters, personal records, etc.) could be stored in a filing cabinet, desk drawer, or a box. Now, there are a number of different ways to save and secure those kinds of documents electronically.

Computer hard drive

If you have your own computer, you can save files (like a resume or a cover letter, if you are job-hunting) directly to the computer itself. The files will exist as long as the computer does!

USB drive

Don't have your own computer? Not a problem. USB drives (also called flash drives or thumb drives) are about the size of your thumb and plug into most computers. While space is generally more limited, you can save thousands of documents and/or dozens of images to them. Just don't lose it!

The Cloud

This one took me a while to wrap my head around. Basically, it's a kind of file storage that is accessible to you whenever you have an internet connection.

Scams

Online scams are always something to be on the lookout for! Some will be obvious, and some will be surprisingly convincing. But here are a few good rules of thumb to recognize when someone is trying to steal your money or personal information:

Urgency

Is the message/ad/text telling you that you need to take advantage of this offer **right now** or you'll miss out? It's a common trick to try to make you act first without thinking.

Bad spelling

Sometimes messages from "official" senders (like some government agency) will have minor errors in spelling or grammar. It's a clue that the sender is a fraud.

You're a winner!

You may get an unexpected message saying that you qualify for great benefit, or you can claim thousands of dollars, or you've won some big prize—and all you have to do is tap a link on your phone or call this number. Don't do it!

Fear

Scammers will try to convince you that you may owe a lot of money if you don't pay a little right now, or that you may be in legal trouble if you don't respond / pay a fine (I once got a phone call from someone claiming to be with U.S. Immigration and Customs who said they intercepted a package containing illegal materials, and that I needed to answer some questions. I just hung up, and they never contacted me again.).

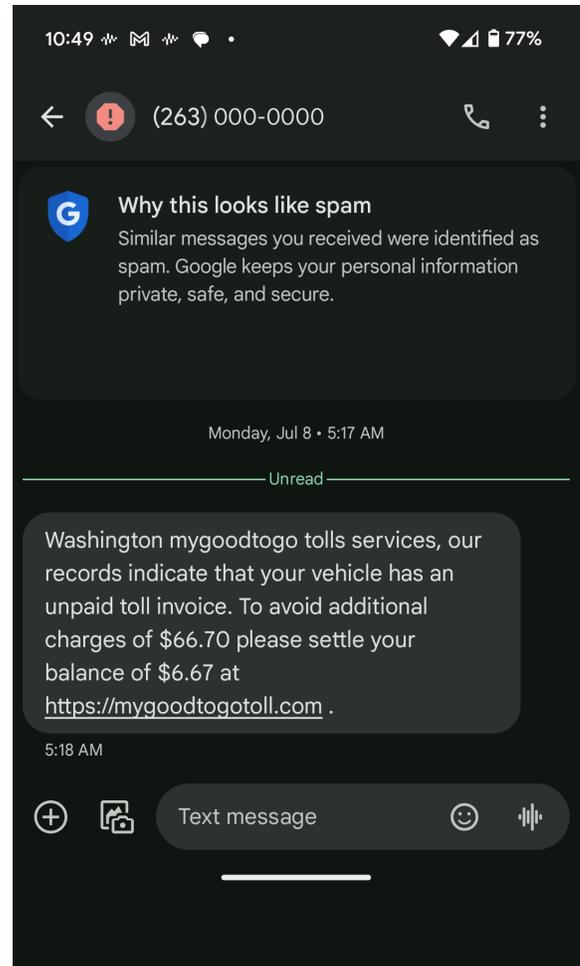
Cryptocurrencies

These are very complicated to explain (it would take several pages), and some people feel very strongly about crypto's reliability (or lack thereof). My word of advice: if anyone wants you to buy/invest in things called Bitcoin, NFTs, or anything similar, just walk away.

When in doubt, ask somebody about it. Another great resource is Google! Frequently, I will go to Google and search "Is _____ a scam?" and get dozens of results that confirm it is a scam. As the saying goes, if something sounds too good to be true—it usually is.

Getting a Phone

A lot of modern life is made easier if you are able to get yourself a phone. Since they can be expensive, you should see if you are eligible to get a free phone. Alabama has programs called Lifeline and Link-UP (details



here: <https://psc.alabama.gov/telecom-assistance-programs/>) that can help with paying for a phone line. There are a few private companies that offer access to these programs, such as TruConnect. You can find out more about how to apply here: www.truconnect.com/states/alabama.

Plans + Data

You may have some options for phone plans—most will provide some option for “Data” which means how much internet you can use each month on your phone. Think of it this way: you get a gallon of water, and every time you go to a website or check your email, you use a few drops. At the end of the month, you get a new gallon (but your old one disappears). If you run out early, you’ll have to wait for next month.

TERMINOLOGY

URL | Also known as a website address (kind of like a postal address in that it refers to a specific location on the Internet). It’s pronounced “You-are-ell”, and it means Uniform Resource Locator (but you will never need to know that). Examples of URLs are: www.google.com, <https://apaep.auburn.edu>, and www.healthcare.gov.

App | Short for “application”; it means a computer program.

WiFi | Short for “wireless fidelity” (another term you’ll never need to know). It’s one way of connecting your computer/phone/tablet to the internet without needing a cable or wire.

USB | This stands for “Universal Serial Bus”. It will never come up in conversation. It’s just a plug for a USB drive/cord on a computer.

Wifi

The good news is that many businesses offer free wifi (or you can use the wifi of a friend). Wifi allows your phone to connect to the internet without using any data from your gallon.

Social Media

There are so many ways for people to get in touch with each other through apps like Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, LinkedIn, Discord, and so many others. They can be a great way to find communities of people with interests similar to yours, but you will also want to be careful! They are a common way for scammers to try to get to you, too.

- If you receive a friend request or message from someone you don't know, don't accept it. They may try to lure you in with an "attractive" profile photo.
- Take everything you learn/read/watch on social media with a grain of salt—if a story is "going viral" (being shared thousands/millions of times), it is common for it to be missing key details.
- Social media companies make money by how much time you spend on their app and how many links you click/tap. Sometimes, cute/funny videos encourage us to stay engaged. Other times, it is headlines and videos created specifically to get you angry about something. There have been studies that have shown too much social media can be harmful for your mental health—so be sure to "unplug" from it once in a while.

SECTION NOTES

SECTION 8

Voting Rights

HELLO, I'M SHERITA! There are a few factors that can determine if/how you can restore your voting rights in Alabama. It may depend on your crime of conviction, if you still owe any fees/restitution, or how long you have left on your sentence. For full details, follow this link: www.sos.alabama.gov/sites/default/files/Voting-Rights-Final-Version.pdf.



If you meet all the requirements to have your voting rights restored, you will need to fill out a form from the Alabama Bureau of Pardons and Paroles (ABPP), the ABPP-4 Certificate of Eligibility to Register to Vote Application form, found here: <https://paroles.alabama.gov/wp-content/uploads/ABPP-4-CERV-Application.pdf>. You can then mail the form to:

Alabama Bureau of Pardons and Paroles
P.O. Box 302405
Montgomery, AL 36130-2405

If you still owe money, you may be able to get it reduced or forgiven by filling out a ABPP-5 Remission of Fine and/or Forfeiture Application form (instructions included on page 3 of the pdf): <https://paroles.alabama.gov/wp-content/uploads/ABPP-5-Remission-of-Fine-and-or-Forfeiture-Application.pdf>.



PHOTO FROM GOOGLE

You can then mail the form to:

Alabama Bureau of Pardons and Paroles

100 Capitol Commerce Boulevard, Suite 310

Montgomery, AL 36117

In some cases, you will require a pardon in order to vote again;

you can find the Pardon Application form here:

<https://paroles.alabama.gov/wp-content/uploads/ABPP-3-Pardon-Application.pdf>.

You'll mail the form to the same address for CERV applications (listed again here):

SECTION 9

Subsidized Child Care



IT'S SHERITA AGAIN. We know child care is the top priority for many people—please see below for a list of organizations that can help:

Alabama Department of Human Resources
Child Care Services Division | (334) 242-1425 or
1-866-528-1694
50 N. Ripley St., Montgomery 36130-4000
P.O. Box 304000
fax: (334) 353-1491
<https://dhr.alabama.gov/child-care/>

Childcare Centers

JEFFERSON COUNTY

CA Child Care Home
301 Lamplighter Lane
Birmingham, AL 35214
205-918-3388

Keta's One Step to Learning
223 Ray Street
Bessemer, AL 35020
205-965-0979

First Start Child Care Center
1208 Stonehedge Drive
Birmingham, AL 35235
205-834-0875

**Learning Zone
Christian Academy**
1616 41st Street
Birmingham, AL 35208
205-441-1292

Gracie's Garden
1761 English Knoll Lane
Birmingham, AL 35235
205-502-6353

Love Joy Ministries
210 64th Street South
Birmingham, AL 35212
205-591-7317

**Growing in Grace
Child Development**
115 1st Avenue South
Birmingham, AL 35205
205-720-3220

Peace and Smiles Day Care
1269 Hiawatha Drive
Birmingham, AL 35215
205-413-6815

**Happy Faces
Christian Academy**
1825 Christian Street
Birmingham, AL 35235
205-218-2224

Robinson School of Learning
748 Sherwood Road
Fairfield, AL 35064
Phone: 205-923-4906

Ro's Heavenly Angels

613 14th Street N.
Bessemer, AL 35020
Phone: 205-899-1080

Tender Christian Care

1541 Pine Tree Drive
Birmingham, AL 35235
205-587-5014

**Square by Square
Christian Home Daycare**

1444 Chevelle Street
Birmingham, AL 35214
205-492-8766

**T-Ginny's Day Care
& Learning Center**

308 Harris Avenue
Adamsville, AL 35005
Phone: 205-674-8313

Sunny Lane Child Care

1334 Sunny Lane
Mt. Olive, AL 35117
205-500-2121

Thomas Day Care

312 Claxton Way
Fairfield, AL 35064
Phone: 205-923-0314

**Sunshine Kids
Development Center**

612 McAdory Avenue
Birmingham, AL 35020
205-565-7282

Vera's Child Care

6605 Avenue K
Birmingham, AL 35228
Phone: 205-925-8611

Stepping Stones Child Care

509 Flint Parc Cir.
Bessemer, AL 35022
205-800-7221

SECTION NOTES

CONCLUSION

We reach
an end – but
not the end ...
There will be
more to come.

We already have a whole list of items and information that we didn't have time to fit into this edition. Also, Alabama is always changing. New programs are founded, and old policies are revised. Keep an eye out next year for updates and a bigger, even more comprehensive guide.

For now, what matters most to us is what **you** think. Please let us know if this guide was useful to you. For example, we would love to know:

- If you had questions and couldn't find the answers
- If parts were confusing or unclear
- If websites, phone numbers, or addresses were incorrect (or no longer in service)

- If the language and writing was difficult to get through
- If the examples made sense
- What we need more of (or less of)
- What else we can do to improve

We would also greatly appreciate hearing about your experience of re-entry – including or separate from this guide. What words of wisdom would you share to future readers? What tips and suggestions would you have for others following you on this road? Your insight has the potential to make unexpected barriers and obstacles not quite as difficult for the next person.

Your voice matters. And so do you.

Until next time,
The APAEP Team

Community Education Resource Center

131 41st Street South
Birmingham, AL 35222
(659) 214-9329
apaepbr@auburn.edu
facebook.com/CERCinBHM

Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project

1061 Beard-Eaves Memorial Coliseum
Auburn University, AL 36849
apaepau@auburn.edu
apaep.auburn.edu

Appendix

Job hunting can be an exhausting process no matter your background! It is common to need to apply/interview at several places before getting hired. Don't get discouraged if it takes a while! To help keep track of things, you can use the Job Search Log on the following pages.

“You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it.”

— MAYA ANGELOU —

JOB SEARCH LOG

	JOB	LOCATION	DATE APPLIED	ONLINE OR PAPER	CONTACT	FOLLOW-UP EMAIL SENT	RESULT
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							

JOB SEARCH LOG

	JOB	LOCATION	DATE APPLIED	ONLINE OR PAPER	CONTACT	FOLLOW-UP EMAIL SENT	RESULT
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							

