



Please Note: The information contained in this Guide is not intended as legal advice in any individual's case. There are many exceptions and variations in the parole consideration process. If you have questions, please consult with an experienced parole attorney.

HOW TO WRITE A PAROLE PLAN

This Guide is intended to help you create a parole plan to present to the Board of Parole Hearings (“Board”) during a parole consideration hearing. A parole plan is a detailed plan for your life after your release from prison. Although parole plans are not required by the Board, they are very important for you to prepare and give to the Board before or during your parole consideration hearing. This Guide contains a lot of information and may feel overwhelming. Feel free to work one section at a time, and review this Guide as needed as you write your parole plans.

A parole plan is important to show that you have realistic, concrete plans to reenter the community in a safe and supported way. **There is not one “right” way to write parole plans; what matters most is the content.** This Guide will explain how to write one form of a parole plan. No matter what type of parole plan you choose to submit to the Board, we recommend including the following sections: (1) a timeline of your needs and goals post-release; (2) job offers, support letters, or research explaining how you will support yourself financially; (3) housing plans and transitional housing acceptance letters; (4) viable transportation options; (5) plans for accessing services and programming; and (6) a list of your community support network.

Each of these sections should be *specific* and demonstrate to the Board that these plans are *tailored* to who you are, your interests, and your plans for the future. Further, ideally each section would be accompanied by a letter of acceptance or support, or research to demonstrate that each plan is certain, or nearly certain to occur. While this is not always possible, do your best to demonstrate that you have taken time to reflect on and research what you will need to be successful on the outside.

I. Write a Timeline of Your Post-Release Goals

This section provides an overview of your days, months, and years following release. This timeline can be divided into different periods of time based on your needs, but below, we provide one way of creating a timeline. Each timeline can detail your immediate necessities (1-7 days after release), short term plans (between 7 days and six months from release), and long-term accomplishments (after six months from release). This gives you an opportunity to show the Board that you understand the steps you will need to take to care for your basic needs and positively contribute to society.

1. Immediate Necessities

The first section of your timeline should demonstrate your immediate needs after you are released. Reflect on the actions you will need to take right away to allow you to obtain housing, a job, and navigate a world that has changed dramatically since you have been incarcerated. Some immediate needs may include: contacting your parole officer, checking into a transitional housing facility, getting a bus pass or figuring out public transportation, applying for health care or food stamps, locating AA or NA meetings, connecting with a sponsor or loved one, attending a transitional job program, buying a cell phone, or obtaining official documents such as an ID, birth certificate, or social security card.

2. Short-Term Plans

The second section of your timeline should build on your immediate needs, and detail how you are going to maintain a stable lifestyle. For example, it might include steps such as: continued attendance in support groups, finding a therapist, opening a bank account, getting a driver's license, maintaining contact with your parole officer, seeing a doctor, researching housing opportunities, obtaining career advice and starting a job, learning how to use technology, exercising regularly, and continued connection with your loved ones.

3. Long-Term Accomplishments

The last section of your timeline is an opportunity to share your long-term vision and dreams. When you envision yourself a few years from now, what does your life look like? Do you have your own apartment and transportation? Do you have your own business? Are you giving back to your community? Do you have a family? Think about the steps that you will need to take to make those dreams a reality. Long-term goals could include: enrolling in school or a vocational program, starting your own business, working towards a promotion at work, volunteering time to mentor youth, saving money for a down payment on a house, and getting married.

II. Create a List of Concrete Plans

Next, you should make *specific* plans to accomplish each of your goals. We recommend including details for each of the following categories:

1. Housing

The Board is most comfortable when people plan to reside in a transitional housing program before moving in with family or friends, and often requires people to live in transitional housing for six months to one year. This is especially true for those with a history of drug or alcohol addiction. You should contact transitional housing providers in the county

where you plan to parole, and obtain letters of acceptance into the programs. It is a good practice to have more than one option for transitional housing.

Tips for what to include in your plan:

- If you have multiple acceptance letters, list (or be prepared to discuss) which transitional housing provider is your first choice and why.
- Your plans after leaving transitional housing. This could include a plan to live with a friend or family member. Be sure to get a letter of support from this individual to verify that they agree to and support this arrangement.
- If, due to the nature of your commitment offense, you must register under Penal Code section 290, you should disclose that information to the transitional housing provider to ensure that they can accept you into their program. Ask that the provider state in the letter that they are aware you must register and that you are permitted to reside at their program.

2. Employment

You should make detailed plans to that show that you can take care of your basic needs without resorting to criminal activity. There are various ways to demonstrate that you will be financially stable post-release. Below are several ways to demonstrate this to the Board.

If upon release you must register under Penal Code 290, be sure to research the potential impact on your ability to have certain jobs. For example, you may not be able to work with certain populations, like children. The Board will want to know that you understand these limitations on your job search, and that you are prepared to handle the additional stressors that registration requires.

Job Offers

The best option is to present a firm job offer. You can list the employer's name, address, and phone number. The employer should also write a letter to the Board verifying the job offer. This letter should be specific, and include your job title, duties, how many hours per week you will work, and the pay rate.

Here are some tips for obtaining a job offer:

- Think about people you know who run businesses or who may be able to connect you to an employer. Often, a sibling or cousin may know a friend who owns a company that might be willing to hire you. Or, reach out to people you know from prison who have been released and see if they can connect you with their current employer.

- If you are working in a trade in prison, talk to your supervisor to see if they have any connections to businesses on the outside. They may be able to provide contact information or a recommendation for potential jobs.
- Ask a friend or family member to help you research businesses in your area of interest. You can directly write to the business, tell them about your experience, and ask if they would be willing to offer you a position if you are released.

Tentative Offers of Employment or Interview

The Board understands that finding a job from inside prison is difficult. So, you can list tentative job offers or transitional job programs that have confirmed they will consider you for a job or training program. Some organizations or businesses may also write a letter saying that they commit to interviewing you upon release. The Board likes to see that you have proactively reached out to places of employment and have committed to the job search.

Employment Research

Alternatively, if you are unable to provide letters, you can also submit a document outlining your job search process. Put together a list of jobs that you could get with your skillset. In making this list, be mindful of how your criminal record may impact your choices, and focus on opportunities where your record may be less of a barrier. This will show that you understand that not all jobs will hire people with criminal records, but many will, and that you have already started thinking about which jobs you will apply to.

3. Transportation

Explain how you plan to travel from your transitional housing provider to your jobs or support groups. For example, you can ask for support in researching the public transportation options and their cost in the area where you plan to parole. You also can detail any members of your support network who have committed to giving you rides, or your future plans to rent or buy a car once you have your license.

4. Programming

Reflect on the support systems you will need when you are back in the community to thrive and feel supported. If you have a history of substance abuse, make sure to research which AA and NA meetings are close to your transitional housing providers. Other support program options could include: lifer support meetings, anger management, criminal and gangs anonymous, and individual or group therapy. Be sure to list all the programs you plan to attend, and include the addresses and phone numbers for the programs, if possible. If you have access to them, it can be helpful to include schedules of local groups in the area where you plan to parole.

5. *Support Network*

Document all the people in your life that you can call upon to provide you support and advice as you return to the community. These people can include: family members, friends, religious institutions, sponsors, or mentors. Be sure to include the person's name, their contact information, and their relationship to you.

6. *Other Possible Sections*

Parole plans should reflect your own individualized plan for reentry. Think about including additional sections to reflect your unique needs and considerations upon reentering the community. Examples could include:

Challenges: You can document potential challenges during reentry that may arise and how you plan to overcome those challenges.

Social & Recreational Interests: You can list positive activities you plan to engage in, such as exercise, volunteering, and family time.

Health Care: If you have specific medical needs, it is a good idea to make a plan for getting health insurance, connecting with doctors, and other steps for how you will maintain your physical and mental health post-release.

III. Verify Your Plans Through Support Letters and Research

For every plan that you make, be sure to ask transitional housing providers, employers, and supporters to verify their support in a letter to the Board. These letters should be as specific as possible about the details of the support that the person will provide.

There are sections of your parole plan that may not be achievable or verifiable while you are in prison. For areas such as these (like obtaining your California ID), you can ask a friend, family member, or counselor to help you research as many details as possible to show you know how to achieve the goal. For example, you could include the address of the DMV and demonstrate that you understand which documents you will need to bring to the appointment to get your ID.

In conclusion, this Guide provides a summary of how to write *one type* of parole plan. No matter what structure you decide to use or sections to include, we hope this Guide is helpful in reflecting on the various sections you can include to demonstrate your readiness for release.