

IDAHO

INCARCERATED VETERANS
RESOURCE MANUAL

BOISE VET CENTER

BOISE VET CENTER – INCARCERATED VETERANS RESOURCE MANUAL

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Acknowledgement: We appreciate any public domain and agency resources included in the guidebook.

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CHAPTER ONE: HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

* Each chapter in this manual is divided into sections.

- The “How It Works” sections contain detailed information, opinions, and suggestions that are offered for the veterans who find that useful. The content in these sections is based on the questions and experiences of many incarcerated veterans in the Boise, ID area.

- The “What You Can Do” sections contain information on steps veterans can, or need to, take in order to access the resource discussed in that chapter.

- The “Where to Get Help” sections contain information on how to contact agencies, programs, or individuals who can provide assistance.

* The information, opinions, and suggestions in this manual are the best available to the Boise Vet Center staff at the time this is written. You may find better, newer, more complete, or changed information as you go about putting your life back together.

* Best of luck to all of you in your efforts!

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CHAPTER TWO: PUTTING TOGETHER A PAROLE PLAN

** HOW IT WORKS

* COMPONENTS OF A PAROLE PLAN:

- YOU WILL NEED:

1. CONFIRMATION OF RESIDENCE

- Transitional housing can be a useful alternative that can give people coming out of prison a stable place to stay while they get their affairs in order.
- Staying with family or clergy is another usually good option.
- Permanent housing should be part of your long term plan.
- Housing issues and options are covered in detail in Chapter 4.

2. WORK CONFIRMATION OR WORK-SEEKING PLAN

- A job confirmation from an employer or former employer is ideal. Jobs with friends or family may or not be OK; it would need to be a "real job" (with regular hours, regular paychecks, not paid "under the table"). Do not cite jobs with any friends or family, especially if they were part of your getting into legal trouble.

- For most inmates, who won't have a job confirmation, a good alternative is a work seeking plan that shows you've invested some time, effort, and thought. A work seeking plan package should include:

- + A brief resume listing your employment goals, your job skills, your work experience, and any education or training you've completed, including anything you've done while incarcerated to improve your job skills.
- + A work seeking plan describing what kinds of jobs you will seek, how and where you plan to look for work, and what kind of assistance you will access for your job search. You might have one plan for immediate employment goals and a more general one for long term employment goals.
- + A summary of whom you have contacted about looking for work and what their response was.

- Employment issues are covered in more in Chapter 5.

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3. TREATMENT PLAN

- This usually involves paying for a substance abuse evaluation from a provider approved by IDOC, and then complying with recommended treatment or counseling (for more detail on this, attend Conditions of Parole, Chapter 3.) VA resources are not available to provide or pay for this service.
- Usually will include AA / NA meetings. Find and use a sponsor.
- Can also include inpatient SAT, and / or outpatient SAT programs at the VAMC.
- Can include classes or programs continuing classes you took while incarcerated.
- Can also include individual counseling.
- Should address whatever got you here.

4. Include a statement that you are interested in revising your plans according to any suggestions or requirements made by your parole board or officer.

-TO SUPPORT A PAROLE REQUEST:

5. SUPPORT LETTERS

- One page, typed or clearly legible.
- Vet Center staff will write one; we usually include how many group sessions you have attended, whether you are eligible for VA Medical Benefits and / or Vet Center services, and what VA resources are available to you on release.
- Include letters from family, AA/NA sponsor, clergy, former employers, or any other persons who are planning to provide assistance to you after your release.

6. CERTIFICATES OF COMPLETION

- From required ISCI / State-sanctioned classes.
- From optional classes and programs.

7. WORK EVALUATION

- From your ISCI job and / or ISCI volunteer work.

- IDOC PAPERWORK

8. PAROLE APPLICATION

- Complete this with your prison caseworker or counselor.
- Remember this is going to be a contract with the parole board. Don't volunteer to include anything in your parole plan to which you do not plan to commit.

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9. OTHER IDOC PAPERWORK

- A parole request generates an RFI (Request For Investigation), which will be conducted by a pre-board officer.
- Other documents such as an LSIR (Level of Service Inventory Revised) score if you have one, Needs assessment, and Case plan will be assembled by your prison caseworker, your pre-board officer, and / or other ISCI and IDOC staff.

- THINGS THAT YOUR PRE-BOARD OFFICER AND THE BOARD ARE LOOKING FOR:

1. Taking some initiative vs. trying to get by on the bare minimum - especially in the housing, employment, and treatment areas.

- In each area, briefly state your goals and then list the steps you plan to take to reach them. Show that you've done some research and planning, and especially that you have taken whatever steps you can while you're still incarcerated.

- Don't make vague, general statements of your future intentions. Instead, provide specific and concrete information. For example, you can write to:

+ Housing providers (covered Chapter 4).

+ Staffing agencies, Job Service, and employers (covered Chapter 5).

+ Treatment providers (agencies that provide individual counseling, substance abuse treatment, or treatment programs for things like anger management, domestic violence, or sex offenses.)

+ Ask them to write back and tell you:

HOW you apply for their services,

WHO you can contact to do that,

WHERE you can do this (their address),

WHEN (what their hours are, or how soon before your release you can apply by mail),
and

WHAT any restrictions, requirements, or rules are that you need to know in order to apply; what abilities, experience and goals you have.

2. Backing up what you say with what you've done. This means things like:

- taking classes and programs while incarcerated

- working or consistently trying to get a job while incarcerated

- studying on your own

- doing volunteer work

- staying out of trouble (to the best of your ability)

- asking your ISCI counselor / caseworker for help as needed. (Communicate in writing, be polite even if you're frustrated, and keep a copy of everything you send and receive.)

- taking action consistently over time, vs. doing a lot of things just before parole, or for a short time and then not following through.

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3. Take seriously what your ISCI caseworker, pre-board officer, and the parole board tell you. (Take advice from jail house lawyers with a grain of salt.)

- If you're told by someone in the parole system that you need certain things to get paroled, you can probably believe them.

- If you go up for parole and you're turned down, take note of what they tell you as to why. This is a list of things you'll need to address in your next parole request.

4. Family involvement:

- Unless your family was involved in whatever got you into custody, it's usually a "plus" if you have taken action maintain, strengthen, and / or re-establish ties with family. You can do this while you're incarcerated by writing on a consistent basis, and by showing an interest in them and their concerns. If your family lives far away, your pre-board officer or the board may want you to remain in the Boise area for a time after your release; if this applies to you, then discuss this with your ISCI counselor or pre-board officer.

- THINGS THAT PRE BOARD OFFICERS HAVE TOLD ME THEY DON'T LIKE TO SEE:

1. Trying to get out on the bare minimum.

2. No initiative to prepare for parole.

3. No initiative to prepare for life after release.

4. Statements about having changed, but with no observed change in behavior - you usually can't talk your way out of situations you have behaved yourself into, including incarceration.

5. Not taking advantage of available programs and resources while incarcerated (limited as they may be) - classes, jobs, asking for help from your ISCI caseworker.

** WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Put together a parole plan, even if you don't think you're going to need one.

+ Regardless of how soon or how far away your parole possibilities are, a parole plan will help you identify what you can begin to work on, perhaps on a long-term basis, that will lay a foundation for parole at a later time.

+ You may need a parole plan on relatively short notice. The better your plan the better chance you have of getting it approved, especially if you are self-initiating a parole request.

** WHERE TO GET HELP:

- With reviewing your parole plan:

+ Your caseworker or counselor on your institution's staff.

+ Paralegal assistants at your institution.

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- With information on accessing employment, housing, and other outside resources:
- + See the relevant chapters of this manual.

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CHAPTER THREE: UNDERSTANDING CONDITIONS OF PAROLE AND DEALING WITH YOUR PAROLE OFFICER

** HOW IT WORKS

- CONDITIONS OF PAROLE:

- + When you are paroled, you will receive documents that specify the Conditions of your parole. Read through these carefully. If you aren't sure what something means, ask your parole officer or caseworker.
- + Plan to comply with these conditions exactly, and you can all but eliminate your chances of returning to prison on a parole violation.

- DEALING WITH YOUR PAROLE OFFICER:

- + Pay any supervision fees or fine payments first, before spending money on anything else.
- + Plan on close scrutiny for the first 90 days. If you're cooperating with your PO and being consistent about taking steps to get a job, housing, and working a program, then your PO will need to see you less and less often.
- + Plan on complying with everything your PO asks for, exactly. Remember that YOU are responsible to comply with parole and paperwork requirements. You aren't excused from any of these, even if your PO overlooks something, doesn't do something, or makes a mistake.
- + Keep a record of all of your activities. Make copies of any documents you turn in to the PO. Bring your copy with you when you turn in paperwork and ask the PO or secretary to stamp your copy as a receipt. Then keep all your documents in a file, organized by date or by subject.
- + Be prepared to be over scheduled. Use a DayTimer or day planner of some kind; plan your day, including time for meals and transportation.
- + Listen to what your PO is telling you he needs to see from you. He's telling you what it's going to take for you to keep from returning to prison. To the best of your ability, try to not treat this person like an enemy, since you do not want him to treat you like one.
- + Keep your PO informed of your residence, employment, treatment program, and parole compliance activities.

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** WHAT YOU CAN DO

- While You Are Incarcerated:

+ If you are at ISCI, plan to come to the Veterans' Group during the week we review parole conditions. Vet Center staff will read through these line by line and translate them into Ordinary English.

+ When you are paroled, read your Conditions of Parole very carefully. You will need to know exactly what it is that you are required to do in order to avoid being returned to prison.

- After You Are Released:

The Parole Officer I interviewed for this manual told me:

+ The top three things that send people back to prison are:

1. Using drugs or alcohol.
2. Running from their PO.
3. Committing new felonies (or other crimes).

+ The things he needs to see in the first 90 days are:

1. A permanent residence.
2. Employment.
3. Ongoing participation in a treatment program - SAT / anger management / sex offender / whatever's relevant to your offense.
4. Compliance with the Parole Officer's requirements and program.

** WHERE TO GET HELP:

- If you have any questions about what your Conditions of Parole mean in practice, ASK YOUR PAROLE OFFICER FIRST. Don't guess. Don't do something risky and hope that it's OK or that you won't get caught.

- Vet Center eligible veterans can work with Vet Center staff for assistance dealing with transition issues or problems. Veterans who are eligible for VA medical benefits can access various kinds of assistance at the VAMC (see Chapter 7 for specific contact information).

- Individual counseling can be a very helpful addition to any kind of treatment program. Services are available through the Vet Center or through Behavioral Health at the Boise VAMC. (See Chapter 7 for specific contact information).

- Your parole officer will have a list of approved providers for ongoing treatment

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programs, groups, and classes. Residential and outpatient substance abuse treatment is available through the VAMC. (See Chapter 7 for specific contact information).

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CHAPTER FOUR: HOUSING IN THE BOISE AREA

** HOW IT WORKS

* KINDS OF HOUSING:

A. Shelters - Work on never needing one. A list of shelters in the Boise area is available from the Vet Center.

B. Transitional housing (Halfway houses and group homes)

- These can be a very good choice for someone new on parole and / or working to maintain recovery.

- Each has different rules and requirements; the two that most people use targeted toward people who are working a substance abuse recovery program.

- The VA has limited transitional housing space available for veterans who are coming out of RSAT. This cannot be pre-arranged while you are incarcerated, but may be available on a case-by-case and space-available basis between release and admission to treatment.

- White City Domiciliary - see the White City info sheet at the end of this guide for more about their programs and admission. You can apply immediately after you are released.

C. Low Income Housing in Boise

1. Boise City Housing (City of Boise)

- + Different complexes around town; there is presently a cluster of vets at the Vista location.

- + Units are around 400 all utilities paid including cable except phone.

- + Move-in costs will be \$300 deposit plus pro-rated rent for the current month; move in late in month if on a budget.

- + Listed felonies (see the application form available from Boise City Housing or the Vet Center) ONLY disqualify IF and only if less than 5 years from conviction. Other felonies, or more than 5 years from conviction, are OK.

- + Units and environment are livable, private, and affordable; BUT some of your neighbors likely will be doing whatever got you in trouble, so ask yourself: Can you walk by their door on the way to yours or not?

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2. Boise City Ada County Housing Authority (HUD)

+ Section 8 Tenant Based Assistance:

adjusts rent to 30% of adjusted income.

rent units from private landlord.

current estimate is three to four year wait

+ Section 8 Project Based Assistance:

adjusts rent to 30% of adjusted income.

rent units from HUD; some facilities restricted to disabled/elderly.

wait list varies.

+ If felony charge is less than three years old, you will need to provide "proof of rehabilitation"; certificate of completion from anger management/ drug rehab/ other offender programs will work.

+ Deal breakers are conviction for manufacturing (but not possession or sale of) drugs in ANY federally subsidized housing unit; and being subject to "a lifetime registration requirement under a State Sex offender registration program."

+ CAN sign up while incarcerated, CAN request hold of up to 6 months after you come to top of wait list.

3. Section 42 Affordable Housing

+ Federal subsidy accessed through individual landlords

+ Units rented at fixed rate set by Federal formula "deemed affordable to households at 30%, 50%, or 60% of Area Median Income".

+ Not many units at the lowest rate.

+ Typical unit around 450/month plus electric phone and cable; plan on about 500-550 per/month total; income limit 23k annual for 1 person.

+ You will need deposit and references.

+ Most landlords require criminal background check; restrictions vary; ask first before applying.

D. Market rate apartments from private landlords.

+ You will need references, deposits, and a criminal background check; restrictions vary, ask first before applying.

E. Market rate houses from private landlords.

+ This is the most expensive kind of rental housing; both rents, deposits, and utilities are usually higher for houses than for apartments.

+ You will need references, deposits, and a criminal background check; restrictions vary, ask first before applying.

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F. Purchasing a home.

+ This is possible for many veterans after they establish a stable income and establish some credit. The VA may help with down payment and financing. Talk to a Buyer's Agent to find out more.

* COMMON HOUSING ISSUES

G. Dealing with landlords:

- Be prepared to supply references and to pay for a criminal background check - don't lie about your history.
- Plan on security, cleaning, pet, and rent deposits.
- Don't try to live somewhere without being on the lease.
- Don't move others into your unit without permission from your landlord. This usually means they will need to be added to the lease.
- Read, and then don't ignore, the rules and conditions that come with your lease. There will usually be rules that apply to things like pets, parties, noise, parking, and visitors.
- Tell your landlord if there is a significant problem with your unit or your neighbors.

H. Neighbors and roommates, including family and girlfriends:

- CAN NOT be using, committing crimes, or doing whatever it was that got you in trouble.
- CAN NOT create chaos, disruption, and problems for you. Living with them needs to support, not make more difficult, the things you're trying to accomplish.
- Don't try to have people live with you who aren't on the lease.
- Be honest with yourself about whether or not it is best for you to live alone.

I. Utilities

- Take utility cost into consideration when deciding if you can afford an apartment or house. Houses and mobile homes have higher, often much higher, utility costs than apartments.
- Don't forget water, sewer, trash, phone, and cable when budgeting utilities.
- Find out which utilities are included in rent and which are not.
- If a phone is in your name, get a toll block on the number! You can always use prepaid long distance cards (compare for the best price).
- If you move out of a shared apartment, BE SURE to take any utilities out of your name and your name off the lease before you move out.

** WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- While You Are Incarcerated:

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+ You'll need some kind of permanent or semi-permanent housing arrangement in order to be paroled.

+ This often means living with family or in transitional housing that can be arranged while you are incarcerated. Transitional housing can provide you with a place to live while you are finding employment and / or saving for your own apartment.

+ For most parolees, it's not advisable to try to live outside Ada County for the first few months after release. If you have family or other major resources somewhere else, discuss this with your ISCI counselor and IDOC pre-board officer before you submit a parole plan to the board.

- After You Are Released:

+ Your PO will be looking for you to establish some kind of stable, permanent residence in your first three months after release; although this can include staying longer term in the transitional housing setting.

+ DO NOT move without notifying your parole officer, and DO NOT move outside the county without his advance permission. Moving out of State requires written permission in advance, usually from both your parole officer and from the State you are moving to.

** WHERE TO GET HELP:

- Transitional housing in Boise:

+ Oxford House

Supportive Housing & Innovative Partnerships

P.O. Box 8803 Boise ID 83707

208-331-0900

+ Wymer House

2700 Wymer Street Boise, ID 83702

208-424-6956

- Entry-level individual housing:

+ Boise City Housing and Community Development

1025 South Capitol Boulevard Boise ID 83706

208-384-4158

www.cityofboise.org

- Subsidized housing and housing subsidies:

+ Boise City Ada County Housing Authority.

1276 River Street, Suite #300 Boise, ID 83702

208-245-4907

bcacha.org

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Affordable housing:

+ A current list of individual landlords participating in this program is available at www.ihfa.org

Click on Rental Assistance - Assisted Housing Directory for Idaho; then click on your area on the map of Idaho displayed.

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CHAPTER FIVE: EMPLOYMENT

** HOW IT WORKS

A. KINDS OF JOBS AND HOW TO GET THEM

1. DAY LABOR: one-day jobs, often manual labor, usually paid the same day.

- See Day Labor list for agencies that offer day labor jobs.
- Show up a bit early, clean and with clean clothes. Dress appropriately; wear boots, sturdy pants, layered clothing; and bring gloves.

2. TEMP JOBS: can range from one day to indefinite employment.

- Usually obtained through a staffing agency. Your employer usually will be the temp or staffing agency, not the company where you perform your work.
- Temp jobs refers both to a) jobs that will end after a certain time, and b) longer-term employment where the employer does not pay benefits and can terminate employees without notice or cause.

3. TEMP-TO-HIRE

- "Temp to hire" jobs are temp jobs that may result in part-time or full-time employee status from the company where you are working. Treat these like long job interviews, where the employer is trying you out to see if they want to look at you every morning or not.
- If you can't locate a staffing agency that will offer you a temp to hire job, an alternative is to pick one you like the best and ask if you can take a temp job. Then, after you've done well one or two of those, ask your staffing agency again for a temp to hire job, based on your performance.
- You may pay a commission fee to your staffing agency if you take a permanent job. This can be well worth the cost IF: a) you like the job, b) are good enough at it to hold it, and c) it pays enough to live on.

4. PERMANENT PART TIME

- Part time jobs can come with no benefits, with partial benefits, or with full benefits. For most workers, the most important benefit is health insurance. This may not be a major issue for you, if you are eligible for VA Medical benefits and don't need health insurance for family members.
- Two part time jobs may bring in a full time income.
- One part time job can be helpful if you need lots of time off or if you need work while you look for a full time job.

5. PERMANENT FULL TIME

- If you take a salaried position, get a firm number of hours you're expected to be there each week. Fifty is max. sustainable for most.

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B. LOOKING FOR WORK:

1. Job Service: State of Idaho Department of Commerce and Industry.

- Plan on working with Job Service even if you're looking for work in other ways.
- Make arrangements to attend the workshops and trainings they offer on how to look for work and how to put a resume together.
- Spend some time and learn how to use the job listings and computers.
- Work with your Vet Rep, see handout.

2. Staffing Agencies

- Usually charge a substantial fee for a permanent job placement.
- Try to be clear about your job skills, experience, and limitations. - When considering a permanent position, know your "must-haves" and "deal breakers", and then try to be flexible about what kind of work you can take.

3. Other sources for job leads:

- Unions.
- Former employers.
- Family, friends, and acquaintances.
- Recorded job lines; newspaper ads (Sunday is the main day for help wanted ads); trade magazines and company newsletters; internet help wanted and job search sites.
- State, City, and Federal employment offices and internet sites.
- Cold calling. This works best in high-turnover jobs and / or jobs for which you have special skills.
- "Help Wanted" signs.
- Business that take applications on an ongoing basis.

C. JOB SEARCH ISSUES AND HINTS

- Try to be clear about your job skills, experience, and limitations. - When looking for a job, know your "must-haves" and "deal breakers", and then try to be flexible about what kind of work you can take.
- Remember that you may have one set of needs and goals for immediate employment, and another set of needs and goals for a career.

1. FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS about how to apply for a job.

- If an ad says "no phone calls", then don't call.
- If an ad says apply in person and gives a time, don't be early or late.
- If you are offered a job application, fill it out. Bring a resume so you can leave one if asked or to supplement a job application.
- If you are asked to e-mail a resume, then send your resume as an attached Word or WordPerfect document, along with an e-mail that refers to the job you are applying for. This should also be on the subject line.

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2. When asking about the availability of work, or turning in a job application or resume, phone ahead to ask the name of the manager and when they might be available, and then ask for that person when you arrive at the place of business. If you cannot, or are requested to not, phone ahead, then ask for the name of the manager and what would be the best time to speak with them.

3. Be prepared to fill out job applications. Bring your own pen.

- If you need to, practice filling out some job applications so that you become familiar with them.
- Have a list of references and past employers so that you can fill in names, addresses, and phone numbers that you can copy onto a job application where asked.
- Fill out the form completely. If something doesn't apply to you, fill in "N/A".
- Do work with someone on a short resume, and bring fresh copies with you as you look for work. You'll need something to keep them in so they aren't folded, wrinkled, or soiled.
- You will need a mailing address, and a phone number or reliable message phone.

4. Dress for the interview, not the job. This means:

- fresh shave and shower; fingernails clean and trimmed.
- recent haircut; tattoos covered by clothing where possible
- clothes that are cleaned and pressed
- shoes and belt aren't worn out or dirty
- long sleeves if you need to cover up tattoos or scars
- for a physical labor job, clean sturdy boots, clean sturdy work pants, clean shirt with a collar and long sleeves, and a clean jacket.
- for other jobs, slacks (dark pants that have a crease), a solid (usually white or blue, usually long sleeved) shirt, a tie, and dress shoes (no athletic shoes or sandals for office or retail job interviews).

5. Don't sweat the interview.

- Be polite and respectful, first and foremost.
- Be honest about your legal history on the job application, but don't offer more details than are requested. Be prepared with a brief explanation of your history if asked, such as:

"I was hanging out with the wrong friends and got into trouble in my early 20s, but now I'm a lot happier staying out of trouble, being sober, and working toward my goals in life."

** WHAT YOU CAN DO

- While you are incarcerated:

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+ Write to some potential employers and / or staffing agencies that work with felons (see list on following pages). Briefly describe your abilities, experience and goals. Ask them to write back and tell you:

HOW you apply for their services,

WHO you can contact to do that,

WHERE you can do this (their address),

WHEN (what their hours are, or how soon before your release you can apply by mail),
and

WHAT any restrictions, requirements, or rules are that you need to know in order to apply.

- When you are released:

+ Contact VA Veterans Representative at Job Service (contact information follows this page) and start looking for work as covered in the Looking for Work section above.

+ Update your work seeking skills by participating in workshops and trainings like those offered at WorkSource (contact information on next page).

+ Remember that you're going to be using the job you have as a reference for the job you want.

+ Personal or interpersonal issues may come up on the job. One of the good reasons to be seeing an individual counselor is to have someone who can help you work through your reactions and help with interpersonal skills.

** WHERE TO GET HELP

- WORK SEEKING SKILLS:

+ WorkSource

1001 S. Orchard Boise, ID 83705

- FINDING EMPLOYMENT

Go to cl.idaho.gov

Click on Job Seekers - Veterans Services

for links to many very useful job webpages.

+ Veterans representatives at Idaho Department of Commerce & Labor

Boise: 219 Main St. Boise, ID 83735-0030

Ray Rodriguez 332-3575 x3268

Jerome Roehl 332-3575 x3276

Canyon Co: 6107 Graye Lane Caldwell, ID 83605

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Stan Stansberry 364-7781 x3423

Jim Givens 364-7781 x3961

Statewide:

Go to cl.idaho.gov

Click on Job Seekers - Veterans Services

Click on Idaho Veterans Representatives

+ Day Labor:

Check the yellow pages in your area under Employment Agencies

El Ada Casual Labor

3553 Americana Terrace Boise ID

208-367-0094

Labor Finders

4948 Kootenai St, Suite B Boise ID

345-1703

Labor Ready

1088 N Orchard St Boise ID

331-3606

1314 12 Av S Nampa ID

468-7830

Personnel Plus

5900 Overland Rd Boise ID 83709

208-378-8700

1116 Caldwell Blvd. Nampa ID 83651

208-466-6800

www.personnelinc.com

Retirement Jobs of Idaho

Worksource

1001 S Orchard Boise ID 83705

323-5627 x222

+ Staffing Agencies that work with felons:
contact the Boise Vet Center for a current list.

- Government Jobs

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Federal Job Information: jobsearch.usajobs.opm.gov

State Job Information: www.dhr.idaho.gov

- Portal websites for job seekers:

idahoworks.org

cl.idaho.gov

also check the websites of individual employers in which you may be interested.

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CHAPTER SIX: TRANSPORTATION

** HOW IT WORKS

- TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

A. Walking

- You'll need a State ID card to even walk around Boise.
- You get a State ID card at the County building, where they issue driver's licenses. You'll need photo ID and about \$12.00. You can get photo ID from the VA that can be used to get a State ID card. You may also need a copy of your birth certificate.
- If enjoy talking to policemen, be sure to hitchhike and J-walk.

B. Bicycle

- Highly recommended. Most of the places you'll need to go are accessible by bicycle, 10 months out of 12.
- Contact me at Vet Center about getting a free bicycle from Salvation Army, Deseret Industries, or St. Vincent de Paul. You'll need a referral; probably you'll have to fill out some paperwork and may need to work for an afternoon or two.
- Avoid racing bikes or small mountain bikes. Be sure your bike has the required reflectors; you'll need the required kinds of lights in order to ride after dusk.
- Plan on licensing your bicycle.

C. Riding the Bus.

- There are some, although limited, sources for free bus tickets.
- Consider a bus pass even if you have very limited funds.
- Busses in Boise have bicycle racks on the front, so that you can use a bus-bicycle combination to travel longer distances and then get around once there.
- Get a bus route map, and schedules for the busses you'll be taking. Plan your route and plan where and when you'll catch the buses you need. Be about 10 minutes early; stand up when the bus gets close.

D. Driving: Being a legal driver.

- You must have a legal, current, unsuspended driver's license before you try to drive! If your license is unexpired when you are released, still call the Driver's License office (listed under Ada County Sheriff) to make sure there are no problems with your license. See me about reinstating an expired and / or suspended driver's license. DWP is a serious offense in Idaho (ask your friends); your first is probably a parole violation, your third is a Felony.
- If you've received a no-insurance ticket in the past, you'll need to:

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- a. Buy an SR-22 (for three years), which is a special liability insurance policy on you (insurance is usually on the vehicle, not the driver).
- b. Go to the court house and pay the no insurance ticket and court costs.
- c. Take the SR-22 to the State DOT and pay the reinstatement fee.
- d. Carry the SR-22 and proof of insurance in your car at all times.
- e. I had an SR-22 from 94-97; it cost me \$2200 in increased insurance premiums - but I could drive legally.

- Do not plan on trying to hide your driving past. A policeman will have your complete driving (and criminal) history on a display screen in his car moments after scanning the bar code on your license or ID.
- Don't break parole by drinking or using - but if you ever do, don't turn a parole violation into a new felony by driving.

E. Driving a legal car:

- Before you drive a car, especially someone else's or one that you let someone else drive, you MUST verify that:
 - * There are no drugs, weapons, alcohol, or stolen items in the vehicle. * Lights, brakes, wipers, and signals are fully functional.
 - * Proof of insurance and the correct and current auto registration are in the vehicle.
 - + A proof of insurance can appear valid when it is not! If you think the car you're driving is already insured, you'll need to call the agency to verify that the insurance is in force and that you are covered when driving that car.
 - + An auto registration can appear valid when it is not! In Ada County, an auto registration (meaning the plates) can be cancelled for failure to obtain an air quality inspection. You'll need to call the State DOT.

F. Please, don't share a car.

- Best is to only drive a car that's under your control at all times.
- Not recommended to borrow someone's car or to share a car with someone else. You won't have it when you need it, you don't know what they're doing in it when you're not there, and you don't know what's in it or what kind of condition it's in when you get it back.
- DON'T loan your car to other drivers (see above).

G. If you enjoy talking to policemen, be sure to choose a car that has:

- * body damage
- * spray-painted designs or graffiti
- * windows, tail lights, or turn signals that are covered with plastic
- * a bad muffler

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- * thick smoke coming out of the tailpipe
- * bumper or window stickers that refer to alcohol or drugs, or that insult the police.
- * the sound system turned up so that it can be heard from inside the policeman's vehicle.
- * windows rolled down at night in cool weather.
- * passengers that include people with bizarre appearance or clothing, or young people riding around late at night.

H. Be realistic about the cost of driving.

- Don't just look at the price of the car plus gas. Also consider:
 - + any maintenance or repair you need right away to make the car useable
 - + insurance
 - + maintenance (oil change, tires, brakes, muffler, belts and hoses, tune-ups)
 - + repair costs
- + Do some comparison shopping before you buy a car. Car values can be checked on the internet at kbb.com and nada.com. "Buy here pay here" car lots and new car dealers generally have the highest prices for used cars.

** WHAT YOU CAN DO

- While You Are Incarcerated:
 - + Make some general plans for how you will get around. Remember that you may have one plan for when you are first released and another for after you begin to generate an income.
- When you are released:
 - + Don't try to rely on someone else to get you around. You'll have too many places you need to be and the consequences are too serious if you don't get there.

** WHERE TO GET HELP

- BUS (Valley Ride) 336-1010
- Treasure Valley Transit 465-6472

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CHAPTER SEVEN: VA AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

** HOW IT WORKS

* VA RESOURCES:

+ The Department of Veterans Affairs has several programs and services available to veterans in the Boise ID area. A veterans resource list follows this chapter.

- ELIGIBILITY

+ Eligibility is often different for individual VA programs and services. Contact each one directly for specific information.

- Eligibility for Vet Center Services:

+ Service in a war zone during wartime. See the Vet Center information sheet following.

+ History of sexual trauma while serving in the military.

- Eligibility for most VA Benefits and Services:

+ Honorable, or General under Honorable conditions Discharge.

+ For Vets discharged after September 1980: Honorable, or General under Honorable conditions Discharge; Two years active duty.

+ Other Discharges: Apply to individual programs on a case-by-case basis. OTH fail to qualify veterans for some but not all programs. Vets with both honorable discharge for full tour of duty and OTH for a second tour will qualify for many programs. Full Dishonorable discharges disqualify from most programs.

* COMMUNITY RESOURCES

+ Resources, benefits, and services to low-income and disabled persons in Boise are provided by a constantly-changing assortment of many different kinds of government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and religious organizations. The resource list we use is maintained by the

Boise School District; the most current version is available at <http://www.boiseschools.org/schools/franklin/>

+ Meals and groceries are abundant and easy to access in Boise.

+ Clothing, transportation, emergency shelter, and day labor are relatively available but you will need to make (various) arrangements ahead of time to access them.

+ Medical and mental health services are primarily available from Terry Reilly Clinic if you're not eligible at VAMC and are not Medicaid-eligible. + There's between almost none and zero emergency cash assistance, free gas, or free car repair services available in Boise.

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- Accessing Community Resources:

1. Free meals

- these are available without advance arrangements.

2. Food banks

- keep track of where you've received food and when you can go back.

3. Clothing, Furniture and Appliances.

- see me at Vet Center for a referral for free clothes at the Thrift Stores. Some may allow you to volunteer there for a few days to get better or more merchandise.

4. Emergency shelter: see Housing section.

6. Transportation help: see resource list.

7. Day labor, temp jobs: see Employment section.

8. Medical and mental health services: through Boise VAMC; see also resource list.

9. Substance Abuse Treatment (SAT): Available through the Boise VAMC; and from the local AA / NA groups.

* WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- While You are Incarcerated:

+ Although the Boise VAMC will not enroll an incarcerated veteran for medical benefits, you can order a copy of your DD-214 so that you'll have it available to qualify you for VA benefits and services when you are released.

- When You Are Released:

+ Enroll for Medical Benefits at Boise VAMC.

+ Notify the VA Regional Office of your new address.

+ Access community resources as needed to meet your basic needs, particularly while you are seeking employment.

** WHERE TO GET HELP

- A current list of community resources in the Boise area is available at www.boiseschools.org/schools/franklin/

VA SERVICES AVAILABLE TO VETERANS IN THE BOISE, ID AREA

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* ELIGIBILITY *

- Vet Center Services:

Service in a war zone during wartime, or history of military sexual trauma.

- Most VA Benefits and Services:

Honorable, or General under Honorable conditions Discharge.

Discharge after September 1980:

Honorable, or General under Honorable conditions Discharge

Two years active duty.

- Other Discharges: Apply to individual programs on a case-by-case basis.

* MEDICAL:

- Full range of medical services / VAMC Boise.

- Access: Apply VAMC Boise. Eligibility is arranged by the Business Office, 208-422-1096.

Veterans need to have an Honorable or General under Honorable conditions discharge. Veterans with General under Other Than Honorable conditions discharges may possibly qualify for medical benefits if they also have a General Under Honorable conditions or better discharge that qualifies them for medical benefits. Veterans with a service date on or after 9-7-80 must have a minimum 24 months continuous active duty service, or a service-connected disability rating of 10% or more. Some vets will have co-pays for services and medications; some vets may be placed on a waiting list for some services.

- Mail: Vets are not able to enroll for medical benefits or get on a waiting list to be assigned to a physician, while incarcerated.

* PSYCHIATRIC, INPATIENT:

- Acute care / VAMC Boise.

- Access: In a time of immediate need, walk-in to the emergency room at VAMC; also by physician referral. This is for mental health crises, and for stabilizing psychiatric medications.

* PSYCHIATRIC, OUTPATIENT:

- Both immediate and ongoing services available / VAMC Boise.

- Access ongoing services: Through Behavioral Health 422-1108; By appointment through your assigned team; or may be arranged by e-room staff.

- Access immediate-need services by walk-in to BVAMC e-room.

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* SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT, RESIDENTIAL:

- 21 Day inpatient program / RSAT at VAMC Boise
- Access: Contact RSAT screening staff at 422-1145; plan on a face-to-face intake interview in order to be scheduled for residential program.
- Mail: Not able to sign up while incarcerated.

* SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT, OUTPATIENT:

- Ongoing services / VAMC Boise; including a 12 month (duration varies) outpatient program following RSAT.
- Access: Phone 422-1145, ask for an appointment to arrange for OSAT services.
- Relapse prevention will be supported by participating in OSAT (Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment) at VAMC Boise (see above).

- A current list of AA / NA meetings can be obtained from
T.V.I.C.O.
1516 Vista Ave.
Boise ID 83705
208-344-6111
on the web at: IdahoArea18AA.org

* INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING / PTSD TREATMENT, OUTPATIENT:

- Vet Center, Boise.
- Access: By appointment; all war-zone vets, and any veteran with a history of military sexual trauma. Appointments at this time are available usually within one week, but can be up to one month out for some individual counselors. Phone 342-3612.
- Mail: 5440 Franklin Road, Ste. 100 Boise, ID 83705
- VAMC Behavioral Health
- Access: Call 422-1108 to schedule an appointment. Also may be referred through the Vet Center or your Team at Boise VAMC.

* PTSD TREATMENT PROGRAM, INPATIENT:

- VAMC Boise.
- Access: By counselor or psychiatrist referral only: this is a specialized inpatient treatment program lasting 5 ½ weeks.

* PTSD SUPPORT GROUP:

- Ongoing, closed, combat veterans group at Boise Vet Center
Access: By Vet Center counselor referral only.

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* NURSING HOME / ASSISTED LIVING SERVICES:

- Idaho State Veteran's Home, at Boise VA Medical Center
- Access: Phone 208-334-5000 ask for Admissions Coordinator
- Contact by mail at 320 Collins Road Boise, ID 83702
- Veterans CAN apply while incarcerated.

* RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITY, White City, OR:

Programs:

- Substance abuse treatment, 1-6 weeks
- Relapse prevention/lifestyle changes/work adjustment, 1-6 months
- Homeless/community re-entry program, 1-6 months
- Long term psychiatric follow-up for chronic conditions
- Long term medical follow-up for chronic conditions
- Work hardening; Compensated work therapy
- Healthcare for Homeless Veterans

Access: Requires application packet:

Contact Admissions Social Worker at 541-826-2111, extension 3289

Mail: Department of Veterans Affairs Domiciliary

Admissions Social Worker (122A)

8495 Crater Lake Highway

White City, OR 97503

* OTHER DOMICILIARIES AND ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES:

Any veteran can apply to any VA domiciliary. There are several, in various locations across the United States. Some specialize in certain kinds of treatment or services. There is often a long waiting list for long-term care facilities.

* VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

- VA Voc Rehab

For service-connected disabled vets.

Access: Phone 334-1063 for an eligibility interview.

Mail: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs,
Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment,
805 W. Franklin St. Boise, ID 83702-5560

- State of Idaho

Vocational Rehabilitation, Emerald St. Office

Access: Phone 327-7411 for appointment.

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Mail: 10200 W Emerald St, Ste. 101

* JOB PLACEMENT AND TRAINING

- Idaho Department Commerce and Industry
Access: Phone 332-3575 for appointment with Veteran's rep.
Mail:
Boise Job Service
219 West Main Street
Boise, ID 83705-0030

- WorkSource
1001 S. Orchard
Boise, ID 83705
208-323-5627

* VETERANS ADVOCACY / VA DISABILITY ASSISTANCE

- Idaho Division of Veterans Services,
Office of Veterans Advocacy
Access: Phone 334-1245 for appointment.
Mail: 805 W. Franklin St. Boise, ID 83702-5560

- Disabled American Veterans,
Access: Phone 334-1956 for appointment
Mail:
DAV
VA Regional Office
805 W. Franklin St., Room 205
Boise, ID 83702-5560

* ASSISTANCE WITH DISCHARGE UPGRADE PETITIONS

- Idaho Division of Veterans Services,
Office of Veterans Advocacy
Access: Phone 334-1245 for appointment.
Mail: 805 W. Franklin St. Boise, ID 83702-5560

* SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY ASSISTANCE

- Currently available on a case-by-case basis from Boise Vet Center.

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- Social Security Administration
1-800-772-1213

SSA Boise Office
1249 S Vinnell Way Suite 101
Boise ID 83709
208-321-2900

* VA REGIONAL OFFICE

Department of Veterans Affairs
Boise Regional Office
805 W. Franklin
Boise, ID 83702
1-800-827-1000

* HOMELESS VETERANS PROGRAM

contact: David Herring MSW
Coordinator, Homeless Program
Boise VA Medical Center
500 W. Fort Street
Boise, ID 83702-4598
208-422-1000 x4204

* CLASSES / PROGRAMS: Relapse Prevention, Risk Management, Cognitive Self-Change, Anger Management:

- Currently, VA programs do not substitute for court-ordered or IDOC-mandated programs or classes. VA funds are not available to pay for court-ordered or IDOC-mandated programs or classes. Veterans must access these programs through their Correctional Institution (while incarcerated) or through state-approved private providers (when on parole. Your parole officer will have a current list of approved classes and programs).

- Individual counseling available through the VA Medical Centers, Outpatient Clinics, or Vet Centers can support your work in any of these areas.

* Treasure Valley AA / NA
www.tvico.homestead.com
1527 Vista #10 Boise ID 83705
208-344-6611

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CHAPTER EIGHT: DISABILITY

(Don't make Disability a goal unless work isn't a realistic option for you. The exception is VA service connected compensation.)

** HOW IT WORKS:

* VA DISABILITY

1. VA Non service connected pension

+ Veteran status eligibility: 90 days or more of active duty, at least one day of which was during a period of war. (For VA non service connected pension purposes, Vietnam ended 5-7-75 and Gulf began 8-2-90.) Veterans who entered active duty after 9-8-1980 may have to meet a longer minimum period of active duty. Bad Conduct and Dishonorable discharged vets are almost always excluded, General under Other Than Honorable discharged vets are evaluated on a case-by-case basis; most General under Honorable and Honorable discharged vets are eligible.

+ Medical eligibility: available to vets who are found unable to work or who are 65 or over.

+ Monetary eligibility: Your income from any source must be under \$846 / month (single, no dependents).

+ Payment amount 2005: \$846 / month (single, no dependents) LESS any other income received.

+ Double-dipping: No. Any other income is counted first and a payment issued to make up any shortfall.

+ Incarcerated veterans cannot draw non service connected pensions.

+ Access is through the VA Regional Offices, but work with a Veterans Service Organization (DAV, Idaho Office of Veterans Advocacy).

2. VA Service connected compensation

+ Veteran status eligibility: One day of active duty. Bad Conduct and Dishonorable discharged vets are almost always excluded, General under Other Than Honorable discharged vets are evaluated on a case-by-case basis; most General under Honorable and Honorable discharged vets are eligible.

+ Medical eligibility: the injury or condition must have been caused or made worse by events that were part of your military service.

+ Monetary eligibility: there is no monetary eligibility for service connected compensation.

+ Payment amount: The VA will make a determination as to what extent the injury or condition affects you at the present time, which will be

expressed as a percentage rating ranging from 0% to 100% permanent and total

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disability.

- + Double-dipping: Generally, yes. Service connected compensation is paid regardless of any other income you may receive (except military retirement).
- + Incarcerated veterans draw at the 10% rate (or at half that if their rating is 10% to begin with). Dependents may be able to draw benefits, contact the VA Regional Office.
- + Access is through the VARO, but work with a VSO (DAV, Idaho Office of Veterans Advocacy).

3. Application process

- + Contact a Veterans Service Organization for assistance with applying for VA disability.
- + A medical examination (comp and pen exam) is usually required by the VA. Currently, access is not available to incarcerated veterans.
- + Service connection (tying an injury or condition to an event that took place while you were in military service) needs to be supported by documented evidence, not just the veteran's statement. You will need your military medical records, and may need copies of daily reports or deck logs. Ask your VSO about documenting a service connected comp claim.
- + Service connected compensation ratings can be revised by requesting a re-rating of your disability. Ratings can be decreased as well as increased, so think twice before requesting revision of a generous rating.

* SOCIAL SECURITY

1. Social Security Disability (SSD)

- + Medical eligibility: you must have a condition that prevents you from working (according to Social Security definitions and rules), and that is expected to last at least one year.
- + Monetary eligibility: You must have a certain number of quarters of work (on which Social Security taxes have been paid) in the preceding 10 years, which increases as you get older. For example, a 50 year old needs 28 quarters (7 years) in which he earned \$900 or more per quarter. No extensions are given for incarceration or disability.
- + Payment amount: Payment amounts are based on your work history.
- + Double-dipping:
 - a) With non-earned income, including VA service connected compensation, yes.
 - b) With income from work, very limited. Income from work is not deducted from SSD payments, but if you earn more than \$810 per month from work, or hold a part-time job with regular hours, Social Security may find that you are not disabled.
- + Incarcerated veterans are not eligible for SSD payments.
- + Access is through local Social Security offices. Working with a Social Security Advocate is recommended, and will be necessary if you need to appeal a denial to the

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Administrative Hearing (third) level.

2. Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

- + Medical eligibility: you must have a condition that prevents you from working (according to Social Security definitions and rules), and that is expected to last at least one year.
- + Monetary eligibility: Your income from any source must be less than the current year's SSI amount for the State in which you live (Idaho 2004 was \$579, other States are higher).
- + Payment amount: SSI pays at the annual rate for the State in which you live (Idaho 2004 was \$579) LESS any other income received.
- + Double-dipping: No. Any other income is counted first and a payment issued to make up any shortfall from the SSI amount.
- + Incarcerated veterans cannot draw SSI.
- + Access is through local Social Security offices. Working with a Social Security Advocate is recommended, and will be necessary if you need to appeal a denial to the Administrative Hearing (third) level.

3. Application process

- Access through disability application online or by phone to national 1-800-772-1213 or to local SS office. You will also need to fill out a Disability Report online or on paper form SSA-3368. (A local attorney who specializes in Social Security recommends you fill out the paper form and keep a copy.) You will be asked to state the nature of your disability and report employment history, medical history, and current medications.
- If your initial application is denied you have 60 days to appeal; you can submit additional information or not. If you are denied the second time, you have 60 days to request an Administrative Hearing. You will need legal representation at this level, contact myself or your local SSA office for referral information.

4. SS Disability Review

- SSA may require you to contact your State Voc Rehab office for an evaluation.
- Persons receiving disability will be reviewed at one year, three year, or longer intervals.
- + Recipients will get a form every one, three, or more years asking them questions about their disability.

- + You may also receive a longer form that asks you to restate your disability and provide information about recent treatment. If so, complete this completely and

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thoroughly.

+ If your disability is discontinued, you can appeal; this is a process similar to submitting a new application.

+ If your claim is denied again, you can request an Administrative Hearing. If you get to this level, you will need to work with a Social Security Advocate.

5. Maintaining Social Security Disabled Status:

- If you need to maintain your disabled status with Social Security because supporting yourself with income earned from work is not realistic for you, then do not do things that would:

+ demonstrate that you don't have the disability you say you have.

+ demonstrate that you can work.

+ demonstrate that your condition doesn't require treatment. Do have medical documentation of your disability.

6. If you are drawing SSI / SSD and think you might be able to return to work:

- SSA may have programs (for example, the PASS program for SSI, and Ticket to Work program for SSD) that may continue your benefits while you make the attempt. If you are drawing SSI and think you might want to return to work, your State may have a program that extends Medicaid eligibility or provides other assistance while you make the attempt. SSI recipients can inquire about return to work programs at the SSA or the State Department of Health and Welfare.

SSD recipients can inquire about return to work programs at the SSA or State Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

* OVERPAYMENTS

- VA and Social Security payments are affected by your incarceration. If you fail to notify the VA and / or SSA of your incarceration and continue to receive funds, you will have an overpayment that must be recovered before your regular payments can continue.

- If you were receiving payments before your incarceration, write to SSA and / or the VA before your release to inquire about any overpayment status.

- You can apply for a waiver of repayment of your overpayment; however, the VA and SSA rarely approve waivers for overpayments that are the result of incarceration. An alternative is to request a repayment agreement that allows you to receive a partial monthly payment while the overpayment is being recovered.

** WHAT YOU CAN DO

- While You Are Incarcerated:

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+ If you receive benefits from the VA or Social Security Administration, notify them at your earliest opportunity after you become incarcerated to avoid overpayments. These agencies almost never waive repayment of overpayments that result from incarceration. Repaying overpayments can interfere with your receiving ongoing funds during your incarceration, in the case of VA service connected compensation; or delay your receipt of benefit checks when you are first released, when you will need them the most.

- When You Are Released:

+ If you were receiving benefits before your incarceration, then visit the VA Regional Office and / or Social Security Administration at your very earliest opportunity after your release. If you are disabled and need to apply for VA disability benefits or compensation, then make an appointment with a VSO for assistance with this. If you are disabled and need to apply for Social Security benefits, you can work directly with the SSA, seek assistance at the Boise Vet Center, or seek assistance from a Social Security Advocate.

** WHERE TO GET HELP

- VA Pension or Compensation:

+ Disabled American Veterans
805 W. Franklin St. Boise, ID 83702-5560 208-334-1956

+ Idaho Office of Veterans Advocacy:
805 W. Franklin St. Boise, ID 83702-5560 208-334-1245

- Social Security Disability

+ Vet Center Boise
5440 Franklin Road #100 Boise ID 83705 208-342-3612

+ Social Security Administration
1-800-772-1213

+ Social Security Administration Boise Office
1249 S Vinnell Way Suite 101 Boise ID 83709 208-321-2900

- Social Security Advocates:

+ In the Yellow Pages under Attorneys, Social Security; and under Social Security Services.

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+ Also contact any Social Service organization that works with persons with your disability; these can be found in the telephone Yellow Pages or by searching online.

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CHAPTER NINE: EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

** HOW IT WORKS

* Education

- + Consider continuing your education once you've met your basic needs after being released. In most jobs, the work you do will be based on your abilities, but the pay you receive and the amount of control you have over how you go about your job is going to be based on your credentials.
- + Do some research before you pick a school and a program.

A. Schools and Programs

1. GED

- A GED is worth your time and effort if you don't already have one or a high school diploma.
- GED classes are available at some IDOC facilities. In the community, evening GED courses are available through Boise High School (although the classes themselves may be located elsewhere.) Cost is affordable, but no student financial aid is available. Voc rehab may provide some support funds, on a case-by-case basis.

2. Community Colleges

- Community Colleges are a really excellent option for someone with a GED or high school diploma but who's not quite ready to begin a four year college program.
- In the Boise area, the community college is Treasure Valley Community College. The main campus is in Ontario, OR; there is a branch campus in Caldwell.

3. Four-year Colleges and Universities

- BSU
 - + BSU offers a very good variety of programs, including academic, professional, vocational / technical, and nursing / health tech programs.
 - + The Selland College of Applied Technology has classes in eleven Workforce Training (work skills) areas, and credit or degree programs in ten more.
- NNU / Albertson College
 - + These private colleges offer very expensive, but excellent, academic programs. Scholarships are available for the best students.

4. Career-training schools and Online programs, such as those advertised on television, and short-term technical skill programs.

- These schools vary widely in their quality of instruction and their cost. Consider:

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+ Is this school training me in a skill that is usually learned in a classroom? Are they offering a program that would normally be part of a community college or college curriculum, such as office or computer training? If so, you're likely to be better off going to the traditional school.

+ Is the school or company training me in a specific skill that is best learned hands-on; for example, how to drive large trucks, operate heavy machinery, work on HVAC systems, repair autos, and so forth? These programs can often be very useful.

- You will need to find out:

+ Do graduates of this program have enough skills for an entry level job in their chosen field?

+ Do people who work this job need a credential or license, and does this program qualify me for that?

+ Is employment in this field controlled by a Union, and if so, what are my chances of getting into the union and being assigned to a job?

+ Are the kinds of jobs I will be looking for realistically available? (Hint: the world already has an excess of people trained in drafting).

+ What is the cost of the program, and is it comparable to other programs and justified by the kind of job it trains me for?

+ Is the program unusually long or short, and if so why?

+ What other schools offer similar programs? Compare before you commit.

B. Student Financial Aid

- Student financial aid is available for persons attending an accredited, post-high school school or program. There are two main kinds of financial aid:

* Grants and Scholarships do not have to be repaid.

1. Pell Grants. Eligibility is based on income. The grants aren't very generous, but will pay much of the cost of tuition at, for example, TVCC or BSU.

2. Work-study. These are part-time on-campus jobs that are accessed through the school financial aid office.

3. Scholarships. Some basic scholarships are accessed through your school's financial aid office. The internet gives you access to a very wide array of private scholarships, if you are willing to put in the time and effort to learn about and apply for them.

4. Student loans.

- There are a different kinds of student loans, but all of them have to be paid back. They cannot be discharged through bankruptcy (except in the most extreme cases, which won't include you if you can walk and talk).

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- The cheapest student loans are government-sponsored Direct Student loans that have either no or subsidized interest. Less attractive are student loans with market rate interest rates available through private lenders. Find out the details through the financial aid office of your school.

- Commit to student loans or avoid them?

SUGGESTION: Student loans are a good option if the program you are using them to pay for qualifies you for some kind of employment that is realistically available. This usually means that the program leads to a professional credential or license of some sort (for example in Nursing / Medicine / Medical Technology, Counseling / Social Work, Accounting, Elementary or Secondary Teaching, Criminal Justice). Student loans are not a good option if they do not qualify you for some kind of available employment that will enable you to repay them. Do some research on the field you have in mind before you decide to borrow for school expenses.

- Repaying student loans.

+ Be aware that many student loans accrue interest while you are in school, even though they are not in repayment.

+ Funds received from student loans will be in the form of multiple loans, with different loans for each type of loan and for each semester or sometimes school year. For example, someone might graduate a four year program with for sixteen different student loans, two for each semester.

+ Each loan has a six month grace period, after which the loan goes into repayment status. Student loan repayment can be put into deferment when you are attending school full-time (currently 12 credits for undergraduate, nine for graduate.)

+ There are different ways to consolidate student loans, depending on the total amount owed and the rules that will be in effect at the time. Find out about your options and make a choice at least two months before the end of your six month grace period.

+ DANGER! DO NOT allow your loans to go into default, or you can find your loans converting to very high interest rates and very high monthly payments, that then can be garnished from your paycheck and / or can balloon your loan balance.

C. VA Voc Rehab

- Veterans who have a service connected disability rated at 20% or greater can qualify for services from VA Voc Rehab. Veterans with 10% service connected disability rating can qualify for services if the service connected disability affects their ability to work.

- For best results, fulfill your part of the agreement you make with your caseworker.

D. State of Idaho Vocational Rehabilitation

BOISE VET CENTER – INCARCERATED VETERANS RESOURCE MANUAL

- Qualifications: persons with a disability that interferes with their ability to work.
- + A caseworker will conduct a screening interview. They may schedule testing to determine whether you're disabled under their rules.
- + The caseworker will arrange testing to determine what kinds of work you are able to perform, according to their criteria. Have an idea of the kinds of work you'd like to do.
- + If you make it through their system to this point, the caseworker will schedule an appointment with you to work out with you what kind of job you will be trained for and what kind of training you will receive. You'll need to be somewhat open-minded and flexible about this, but do not agree to be trained for a job you don't want and do not agree to a training plan you can't or don't want to follow.
- + Comply with all of the elements in the agreement you reach with your caseworker, or they will close your file.

** WHAT YOU CAN DO

- While You Are Incarcerated

- + If you do not have a high school diploma or GED, then participate in whatever GED or other educational programs or classes are available at your institution.
- + Think through what kinds of interests and abilities you have that could be applied in a work situation; consider some employment or career goals; find out more about them; and plan what steps you can take to work toward those goals, both now and after you are released.

- When You Are Released

- + Take action toward your education and career goals as soon as you have met your basic housing, employment, and parole requirements.

** WHERE TO GET HELP

- Student Financial Aid

- + Access through the Financial Aid office at your chosen school.
TVCC: www.tvcc.cc.or.us
650 College Blvd Ontario OR 97914
541-881-8822

BSU: www.boisestate.edu
1910 University Dr Boise ID 83725
208-426-1000

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208-426-1000

+ Military Education Benefits
<http://www.gibill.va.gov>, or 1-888-442-4551
VA Regional Office Boise 1-800-

- Vocational Rehabilitation (which may include student financial aid)

+ VA Voc Rehab
Contact information is in Veterans Resource List Chapter 7.

+ State of Idaho Voc Rehab
Contact information is in Veterans Resource List Chapter 7.