



GUIDE TO: GETTING IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS

For those in Pennsylvania DOC Facilities

QUESTION: *How can someone get identification documents while incarcerated?*

ANSWER: Incarcerated people in Pennsylvania should be able to **renew driver's licenses** and **obtain state identification cards**. People should also be able to order duplicate **social security cards** and copies of **birth certificates** while incarcerated.

A DOC counselor is supposed to meet with each incarcerated individual, within a month of their anticipated release date, to walk them through the process of getting identification documents and to provide information about reentry. People nearing their release date who have not heard from a counselor or reentry specialist may want to reach out and remind the facility to provide this service. Please contact the Prison Society if the facility fails to provide this service.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO PREPARE FOR REENTRY

ACTION STEPS: *How to obtain identification documents*

1. **Renew Driver's License or Obtain PA State ID**

- ❖ The Counselor or Reentry Specialist will use the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's (PennDOT) electronic process to see if the person applying is eligible for a driver's license or state ID.
- ❖ Incarcerated people can fill out and sign an "Application to PennDOT" (**form DL-200**) *two years* before their release date with the correct application form (**Application for a PA Non-Driver's Photo ID Card, Renewal of an Expired Non-CDL PA Driver's License, or Application for a Duplicate valid Non-CDL PA Driver's License**) with their facility's Counselor or Reentry Specialist.
- ❖ Reentry staff at the prison will be able to take a PennDOT photo for the new ID.
- ❖ Once a friend or family member on the outside pays the renewal fee and submits the PennDOT renewal paperwork (**PennDOT form DL-143**), PennDOT will issue a camera card to the facility. The incarcerated person will be given the camera card upon release to bring to a PA Driver's License Center for processing.

This letter does not constitute legal assistance or advice, just information. It is possible that the information has changed since the letter was created.

If you have legal questions, you are urged to contact a lawyer or your local Bar Association.

- ❖ People with suspended licenses or who have never had a driver's license can still apply for a non-Driver Photo ID before they are released.

2. **Obtain a Duplicate Social Security Card**

- ❖ Incarcerated people can request a duplicate social security card between *30 and 180 days* before their release using an "Application for a Social Security Card" (**form SS-5**).
- ❖ This process will not apply to incarcerated people who are non-citizens, who are applying for a new social security card, or who need to make changes to social security records.

3. **Request a Copy of a Birth Certificate**

- ❖ Incarcerated people can apply for a birth certificate at any time through email correspondence with the **Regional Reentry Administrator at the Central Office**.
- ❖ The price to obtain birth certificate copies depends on the person's state of birth.
- ❖ Veterans are entitled to receive an official copy of their birth certificates without paying a fee.
- ❖ Having a birth certificate is often required for requesting many other documents or enrolling in some programs. Therefore, it is a good idea to request a birth certificate copy early.

MORE RESOURCES:

1. **Pennsylvania Interactive Reentry Services Map:** online resource that maps reentry services by county and type of service available at: reentrymap.cor.pa.gov
2. **Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project:** civil legal resources for incarcerated people
718 Arch St. #304S, Philadelphia PA 19106 --- 215-925-2966
100 Fifth Ave, Suite 900, Pittsburg, PA 15222 --- 412-434-6175
115 Farley Circle, Suite 110, Lewisburg, PA 17837 – 570-523-1104
3. **Jailhouse Lawyer's Manual:** handbook of legal rights and procedures available for order at: <http://jlm.law.columbia.edu/order-the-jlm/> for \$30 for incarcerated people

**YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO GET HELP FROM
A COUNSELOR IN THE MONTH BEFORE YOUR RELEASE DATE**

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