

my education, *my* freedom:

A Toolkit for Formerly Incarcerated
and System-Impacted Students
Pursuing Education in California



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about the authors

TOOLKIT PARTNERS

Root & Rebound is a reentry legal resource center based in Oakland, CA, and the primary drafter of this toolkit. Its mission is to provide reentry legal expertise to individuals with past criminal justice system involvement, and all those who support them including family members, service providers, government agencies, educators, and employers, so that we can build a society where all people can access opportunity, justice, and a chance at success. Root & Rebound's model combines education, advocacy, and reform.

***Special thanks to the R&R team:** Briana Barnes, Rémy De La Peza, Carmen Garcia, Lizzy Gilbert, Rashida Harmon, Emily Juneau, Katherine Katcher, Aiasha Khalid, Laura Merchant, Cara Palanca, KC Taylor, Sonja Tonnesen, and Deric Washington; summer law clerks Shelley Stewart and Varsha Govindaraju; and public policy intern Laurel Poeton.*

Five Keys provides traditionally underserved communities the opportunity to restart their education with a focus on the Five Keys: **education, employment, recovery, family, and community**. *Special thanks to Steve Good, Dave Bates, Clarece Weinraub, and Joanna Hernandez.*

The Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Reentry, established in the Fall of 2015 under the leadership of Mayor Eric Garcetti and managed by Kimberley Guillemet, dedicates city government resources and services to supporting the City's formerly incarcerated and system-involved constituents. Through partnerships, the Office of Reentry works to make a positive impact in the lives of the formerly incarcerated, and in doing so, make Los Angeles safer and improve economic opportunity for all. *Special thanks to Kimberley Guillemet, Emily Chin, and public policy fellow Isaac Bryan.*



**five
keys**
schools and
programs



**Eric
Garcetti**
#lamayor

CONTRIBUTORS & ADVISORS

We are deeply grateful for the support, contributions, and insight of the following groups and individuals:

African American Male Achievement Program, Oakland Unified School District: Jahi, Program Manager

Because Black is Still Beautiful: Marilyn Jones, Founder & Executive Director

Berkeley City College (Adult Transitions Program): Midhun Joseph, Project Manager/Transitions Liaison

Berkeley Underground Scholars at University of California, Berkeley: Violeta Alvarez, Program Director; Steven Czifra, Soros Justice Fellow; Shalita Williams, Student

California Department of Education: Carmen Martínez-Calderón, Education Programs Consultant; Catherine Peacock

Center for Engagement, Service, and the Public Good: Taffany Lim, Senior Director,

Contra Costa County Office of Education - Parolee Education Program: Carey Buchanan, Program Administrator; Karen McNairy, Transition Specialist

Project Rebound: Jason Bell, Regional Director, Project Rebound Expanded; Romarilyn Ralston, Program Coordinator, Project Rebound at CSU Fullerton; Omar Chavez, Project Rebound Graduate

Prison University Project: Jody Lewen, Executive Director; Jesse Rothman, On-Site Program Coordinator; Allison Lopez, College Preparatory English Program Coordinator

Renewing Communities Initiative, Opportunity Institute: Danny Murillo, Soros Justice Advocacy Fellow, Opportunity & Justice Division; Rebecca Silbert, Director, Renewing Communities Initiative

Restoring Our Communities (ROC) at Laney College: Roger Chung, Ethnic Studies Department Faculty and ROC Director; Vincent Garrett, Program Outreach and Retention Specialist; Alejandra Landin, Equity Specialist

South Seattle College: Omari Amili, R.I.S.E. Navigator

Southern California CCCOE/CDCR Parolee Education Program Orange/Anaheim Parole: Valerie Ross, Transition Specialist

Vera Institute of Justice: Terrell A. Blount, Program Associate, Sentencing and Corrections

executive summary

FOR THE MILLIONS OF CALIFORNIANS impacted by the criminal justice system, furthering education is an exciting opportunity to gain new knowledge and skills, pursue higher-earning careers, build a support network, and lay the foundation for a better life.

But figuring out where to start and what resources are available for going back to school can be tricky and overwhelming—especially for students who are navigating the educational landscape with a record.

Some common questions include: *Where do I*

start? How do I know which school is right for me? How will my arrest or conviction history affect my education and career plans? What resources or groups exist to support formerly incarcerated students?

This Toolkit is designed to answer these questions. We—as formerly incarcerated students, reentry lawyers, educators, and allies—worked together on this Toolkit to offer critical information that can help students and potential students with records navigate their educational goals.

As a summary, this Toolkit contains valuable information:

1 GETTING READY TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL (PAGE 10)

In Section 1, learn about making an education plan, and important first steps you can take.

First steps include:

1. Figure out what types of careers you are interested in pursuing.
2. Research what training and education you need for those careers.
3. Research any barriers to those careers that may exist because of your arrest or conviction history.
4. Get assessed for your educational level and any learning challenges or disabilities.

You will also need to gather identification documents (ID), transcripts, and other important records so you can apply to and enroll in school.

2 EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS & PATHWAYS (PAGE 28)

In Section 2, learn about the different educational options and pathways available in California.

Your long-term career goals and the amount of education you have already completed will help you determine the educational path that best fits your goals and needs. For example, some students are still looking to build basic skills—like reading, writing, English, and math—through Adult Basic Education (ABE). For others, getting a high school degree or equivalency certificate (like the GED) is an important next step. There are also thousands of formerly incarcerated people who are pursuing higher education (Associate’s and Bachelor’s degrees as well as graduate degrees) at California colleges and universities. You can also get started on some of these pathways while incarcerated.

3 PAYING FOR YOUR EDUCATION & FINDING STABILITY IN SCHOOL (PAGE 49)

In Section 3, learn about financial aid for college, student services, and important resources for maintaining stability in school.

While there are many free and low-cost **adult basic education** or **high school equivalency programs**, it can be more challenging to figure out how to pay for **college**. Fortunately, both our federal and state governments provide financial aid such as **fee waivers**, **grants** (money you don't have to pay back), **loans** (money you have to pay back), and **work-study programs** that help you pay for college. There are also a variety of scholarships that can help you get extra money and support for school!

This Section also discusses resources for childcare, housing, and transportation, all critical to your ability to complete your education. While figuring out how to get the money to pay for school is very challenging, there are resources out there that can help you make your educational dreams possible.

CONCLUSION

MORE THAN EVER, people need advanced training and education to better their lives and contribute to society.

This step-by-step Toolkit can help you get on the right track to further your education, increase your opportunities for employment, and make a difference in your community.

By making an educational plan that includes your biggest goals, your strategy for navigating any barriers, and the steps you must take to afford school and stay stable, you can create a better life for yourself and your loved ones.

INTRODUCTION

a letter to readers: *why go back to school?*

Dear Reader,

With this Educational Toolkit in your hands, you have already begun the process of considering education as part of you. While I was doing time, I found myself wondering why it would be worth it for me to go back to school. I made up my mind that school would be the place where I would build my own life compass that would not lead me astray, no matter what the map ahead looked like. The map of your educational journey will likely change at least once; it did for me. What I mean by that is, because of my conviction history, I am not allowed to obtain a license to provide counseling as a psychologist. Although that news was, at first, disappointing and difficult to get past, I promised myself that I would not let that shut me down, and that I would keep my mind open to other options.

Keeping an open and positive outlook kept my compass pointing North and that allowed me to evolve my interests in psychology and supporting others into a new fulfilling mission as an adult literacy and English teacher. So, although my career pathway changed, my mission to be of service to others through education remained true. During your educational journey, you may find yourself in a similar situation, or you may find that your initial academic pursuits and career interests may evolve into something unexpected. But no matter what, you will have the power to self-determine your future and stay true to you. That has been, without a doubt, the most valuable gift I have given myself through my college education.

This Toolkit's mission is to provide you with reality-based hope by giving you the information you will need to make the best choices for yourself and determine what to make of your education given the factors and challenges you will encounter. Throughout all that, remember you are not alone. You have people like me and others who worked on this Toolkit rooting for you and eager to support you. As you make your way onto a school campus, you will meet people that want to hear you out, share their knowledge, and support you as you become your best self, family member, friend, loved one, and community member. Where you find a closed door or no door, build your own, open it, and walk through.

Always onward,



Alejandra Landin
Laney College, Restoring Our Communities

why the education toolkit was created

The Education Toolkit was created to support you in your journey to go back to school after incarceration or criminal justice system involvement, and pursue a meaningful career. We hope it inspires you and eases the process of planning for your education.

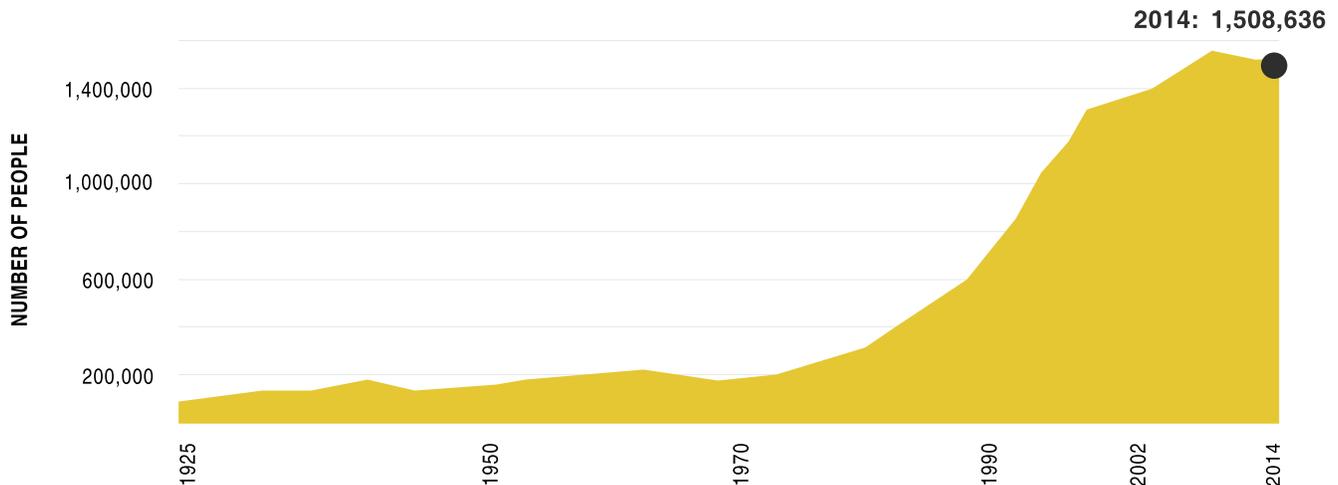
To give you relevant information, the main contributors to this toolkit were people who have been directly impacted by incarceration and chose to continue their education, as well as people

who lead programs for previously incarcerated individuals.

Because the toolkit was written specifically for students and potential students who have been impacted by the criminal justice system—formerly incarcerated students and students with criminal records—it highlights common barriers and provides practical information to help YOU DECIDE how to navigate questions and concerns.

You're not alone.

U.S. STATE AND FEDERAL PRISON POPULATION, 1925-2014



SOURCE: BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS PRISONERS SERIES

As you use this toolkit to continue your educational journey, remember you are not alone. Over the past four decades, incarceration rates in the United States have soared, and today, nearly 1 in 3 Americans has a criminal record.

The exploding prison system has harmed our disadvantaged communities and families the most: people of color, people living in poverty, people with disabilities, and young people who didn't complete high school.

**ABOUT 59% OF PEOPLE
BEHIND BARS ARE
PEOPLE OF COLOR.**

As the state has sent more and more people to prison, its investment in public education has gone down.

- Since 1980, California built 22 prisons and only 1 university.
- Since 1995, the cost to imprison someone in California has increased almost **230%** to an average of \$75,560 per person; but in that same time period education spending only increased **18%** to \$8,210 per student.

This is not acceptable.

BE THE CHANGE

Things are changing. Because of community organizing, advocacy, storytelling, and public education, California is passing laws (like Prop. 47, Prop. 64, Prop. 57, and SB 260/261) that are helping more people come home to their communities and families from prison and jail.

Changing our culture from one of punishment and trauma to one focused on education, healing, and support requires having people with lived experience with the criminal justice system at every level—leadership in schools, the workplace, the community, and politics. Through this Toolkit, we hope you

All individuals sentenced to jail and 96% of those in prison will eventually return home.¹

“*Education is the key to unlock the golden door to freedom.*”

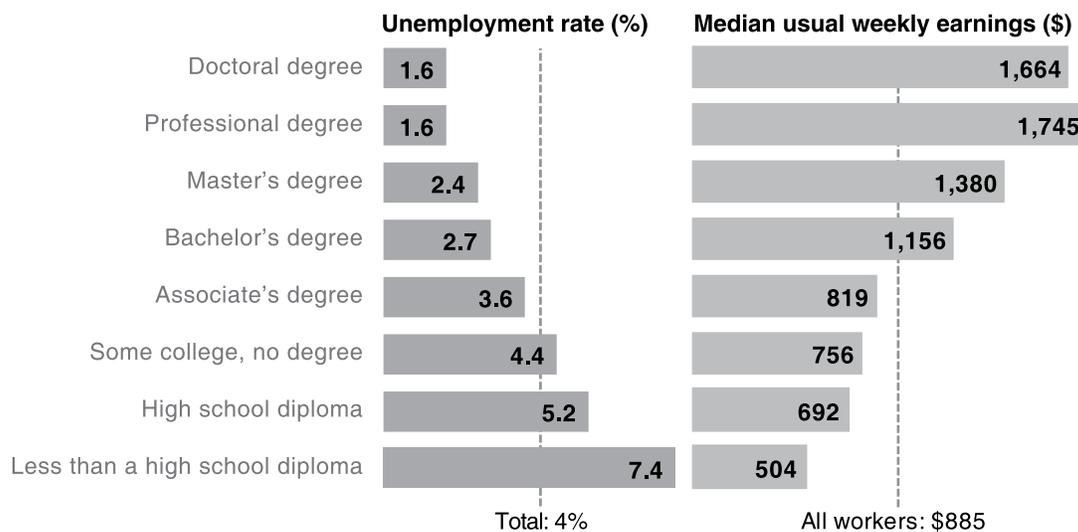
— **GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER,**
PROMINENT AMERICAN BOTANIST,
SCIENTIST, AND INVENTOR, BORN
INTO SLAVERY IN THE 1860S.

feel empowered in your own abilities not only to go back to school, but also to use your education as a tool to change broken systems and to improve the lives of others as you improve yourself.

By going back to school, you can surround yourself with more positive social support and gain access to new careers that help keep you out of poverty.

¹See https://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/DegreesofFreedom2015_FullReport.pdf.

Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainment, 2016



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

https://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm



Education is key to reducing recidivism and increasing access to a better life.

Incarcerated people who participated in correctional education programs were 43% less likely to recidivate than those who did not, and 13% more likely to get employment after release.²

“ You are not your mistake. Own it. Accept the responsibility for it, and move on. It’s not your whole life. Your experiences can drive you to greatness, but you have to be clear that’s where you want to go.”

– **JAH**, PROGRAM MANAGER, AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM, OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

²Lori M Davis, Education and Vocational Training in Prisons Reduces Recidivism, Improves Job Outlook RAND Corporation (2013), <https://www.rand.org/news/press/2013/08/22.html> (last visited Dec 12, 2017).



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GETTING READY TO RETURN TO SCHOOL

SUMMARY - SECTION 1

Before you return to school, it is important to have a plan. This section provides practical steps you can take to:

- Set education objectives, including identifying careers you want and researching possible barriers presented by an arrest or conviction history. ([page 11](#))
- Get assessed for your current education level and any learning challenges or disabilities so you get the support you need in school. ([page 16](#))
- Gather the identification documents (ID) and records necessary to enroll in school and apply to jobs—including your birth certificate, Social Security card, state ID or driver’s license, immunization records, a list of references, Selective Service registration (males only), and transcripts. ([page 18](#))
- Get a copy of your criminal record (RAP sheet) and “clean up” old convictions where possible. This can make you a stronger candidate for future jobs and may help if you apply for a state license or certificate one day. ([page 24](#))

laying the groundwork

SETTING EDUCATION GOALS:

Having a **strong plan** for going back to school will help you develop and stick to your goals, maintain focus, and use your time and money wisely. Here are seven steps you can take towards setting your educational goals:

STEP 1: Assess yourself by thinking about your background, skills, and talents. *(below)*

STEP 2: Determine which careers match your strengths and goals. *(below)*

STEP 3: Research the qualifications, education, licenses, and/or certificates your desired field requires. *(page 12)*

STEP 4: Research any job barriers you might face because of your arrest or conviction history. *(page 12)*

STEP 5: Set yourself up for stability and success by planning for practical needs. *(page 15)*

STEP 6: Get assessed to determine your educational and learning needs. *(page 16)*

STEP 7: Gather identification documents and other records required for attending school. *(page 18)*

step 1 Assess your background, skills, and talents.

Setting your educational and career goals means asking some important questions:

- *Why do you want to go back to school? What motivates you?*
- *How does school fit into your vision for the future?*
- *What kind of career do you want? (Learn more about tools for figuring this out below and on page 67.)*
- *What barriers might you encounter in getting the career you want? (Learn more on pages 13-14.)*



HELPFUL HINTS TO KEEP IN MIND:

1. It is normal for your goals to shift when you go back to school. You can always change your plans to meet new goals.
2. **Help is out there.** There are people out there who will relate to you and support you... **Appendices A** and **E** on pages 65 and 71 suggest groups you can reach out to along the way.

step 2 Determine which careers match your strengths and goals.

One of the first steps in going back to school is creating a list of jobs you may want. Think critically about your strengths and goals for the future as you develop this list.

Here are questions to help you think about the type of job you want:

- **Do you have experience or expertise from a previous job?** *You already have skills and experiences that may be relevant to school and employment.*

- **Do you have a favorite hobby or pastime? For example, do you like connecting with others or do you prefer to be alone?** Do you like to build, write, or draw? Do you work best solo or on a team? Are you an “ideas person?”

Knowing what activities you already enjoy can help point you to career opportunities that you would enjoy as well.

For a list of resources that can help you explore different careers, see [Appendix B \(page 67\)](#). For a list of organizations that may be able to offer support, see [Appendix A \(page 65\)](#).

step 3 Research the qualifications, education, licenses, and/or certificates your desired field requires.

Before you decide which career you want to pursue, it is important to learn about the education and training requirements, including any licensing or certificates you will need.

Here are some online and in-person resources that can help you:

- **My Next Move** is a national website (not specific to California) that can help you research the educational requirements and skills needed for almost any job or career. Visit: <https://www.mynextmove.org/>
- **Five Keys** is a free school that offers career planning and guidance in addition to free educational assessments, adult basic education (ABE), and high school diploma equivalency/GED testing, located in the Bay Area and LA area. Find contact information on [page 17](#).
- **The Federal Bureau of Labor** has some helpful information about the types of jobs that require licenses and certificates here: <https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2016/article/will-i-need-a-license-or-certification.htm>.
- **The California Department of Consumer Affairs** lists the boards and agencies it governs, with links describing the license and certifications each one requires. You can learn more here: http://dca.ca.gov/about_dca/entities.shtml. If you are seeking a licensed profession that is not governed by the DCA, please call Root & Rebound’s reentry legal hotline for more information.
- Call **Root & Rebound’s** reentry legal hotline, any Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. PST, at 510-279-4662, to get *legal information and guidance* about how your criminal record impacts your ability to get a specific license or certificate in California.

step 4 Research any job barriers you might face because of your arrest or conviction history.

Some jobs are harder, or maybe even impossible, to get for individuals with certain arrests or convictions on their record. It is important to be hopeful, but also realistic, as you plan for your education and future career. Knowing potential barriers *and* how to overcome those barriers (if possible) is critical to achieving your goals.

Like the story shared by Alejandra on page 6, if you learn that your arrest or conviction record will stop you from doing the initial job you hoped to do, you can save time and

money by having a Plan B ready. It is much harder to address the barriers after you have completed schooling or training than before you have begun.

So what jobs are harder to get with a record?

Jobs that give employees access to **private or sensitive information** (like financial records), **vulnerable people** (like children, the elderly, patients, or incarcerated people), or **high-security locations** (like airports or federal buildings) tend to have more barriers for people with conviction histories. Jobs that require a **state license or certification** also tend to have more barriers for people with criminal records.



HELPFUL HINT: Clean up your record!

Increase your chances of getting certain jobs by “cleaning up” your record. Find detailed information about how that might help you in [Appendix C](#), pages 68-69.

Examples of jobs that have restrictions on people with certain conviction histories

include: airport security screeners/TSA; law enforcement; defense contractors; port workers; bank employees; insurance employees; teachers; childcare workers; School District staff; and any job that requires a *state license or certificate*.

BUT KEEP IN MIND...

Having a record doesn't automatically exclude you from all jobs that have access to private or sensitive information, vulnerable people, or high-security locations. It just means you should do extra research on how your record will impact your ability to get a job in one of those fields.



BE PROACTIVE!

Research the requirements for any job you want and how your criminal record could affect your getting that job. And talk to a lawyer! You can call the Root & Rebound reentry legal hotline any Friday, 9am-5pm PST, at 510-279-4662.

BARRIERS TO STATE LICENSES AND CERTIFICATES:

In California, roughly 200 careers require a state license or certificate. There are 50+ *licensing boards, agencies, and bureaus* that oversee the license application process.

Here are some key facts to know about licensing boards:

- Each licensing board sets its own rules about how to consider an applicant's criminal record. Some boards and agencies are more restrictive than others.

- Each licensing board must weigh **mitigating evidence** and **rehabilitative evidence**. These terms are defined below:

 <p>Mitigating evidence is anything that helps explain circumstances related to your crime that are no longer an issue for you. For example, if you were very young, if your crime was related to a disability or past addiction, or if you were a victim of domestic violence at the time of your offense. These things help provide context to your past.</p>	 <p>Rehabilitative evidence is proof of your efforts to change and improve yourself. For example, successful completion of a drug rehabilitation program or parenting class; leadership in community, religious, or support groups; and educational certificates all demonstrate rehabilitation.</p>
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Below are examples of jobs that require you to get a state license, certification, or credential before you can do the work (with the agency in charge of those licenses in parentheses):

- **Barber or Cosmetologist** (Bureau of Barbering and Cosmetology)
- **Security Guard** (Bureau of Security and Investigative Services)
- **Contractor** (Contractors State Licensing Board)
- **Real Estate Agent** (Bureau of Real Estate)
- **Dentist and Dental Assistant** (Dental Board of California)
- **Registered Dental Hygienist** (Dental Hygiene Committee)
- **Registered Nurse (RN)** (Board of Registered Nursing)
- **Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)** (Department of Public Health)
- **Home Health Aide (HHA)** (Department of Public Health and the National Association for Home Care & Hospice)
- **Paramedic or Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)** (Emergency Medical Services Authority of California)
- **Pharmacist or Pharmacy Technician** (Board of Pharmacy)
- **Lawyer** (The State Bar of California)
- **Social Worker (LCSW) or Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT)** (Board of Behavioral Sciences)
- **Teacher** (Commission on Teacher Credentialing)
- **Vehicle Salesperson** (Department of Motor Vehicles)

There are a lot of jobs that require licenses and certificates, and it can be much harder if you have a record. **But this does not mean you have to rule out all careers requiring a license.** What it does mean is that it is *very important* to do your research (and talk to a lawyer) *before* you pursue these or other licensed jobs!

To find out if the specific job you want requires a state license or certificate:

- **Call the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA)** at phone number (800) 952-5210. You can also ask the DCA how to contact a specific board.
 - Find a list of California licensing boards here: www.dca.ca.gov/publications/dca_booklet.pdf
 - Find links to California licensing board's web pages here: www.dca.ca.gov/about_dca/entities.shtml
- **Please Note:** There are some licenses and certifications that the DCA does not control. If the DCA does not control the job or board you are interested in, you can call Root & Rebound's reentry legal hotline any Friday, 9 am - 5 pm PST, at phone number 510-279-4662, for legal information and guidance.

If you discover the job you want requires a state license, certificate, or credential, see [Appendix D](#), page 70 for more information.

“ It is important to have ‘reality-based hope’. This means that our dreams must be based in the real barriers that might exist for us because of the way society looks at our past convictions; but it also means that we still get to dream and make plans that will lead us to a meaningful life and career.”

– ALEJANDRA LANDIN,
EQUITY SPECIALIST, LANEY COLLEGE,
RESTORING OUR COMMUNITIES



GET LEGAL HELP: To talk to a reentry lawyer about barriers you could face in pursuing the job you want, call the Root & Rebound reentry legal hotline any Friday, 9 am - 5 pm PST, at phone number 510-279-4662.

step 5 Set yourself up for stability and success by planning for practical needs.

Along with your education and career plan, it is important to prepare for your **practical and financial needs** as you go back to school. Below are some initial questions to ask yourself. There is more information about financial aid and stability in school on pages 49-60.

Questions to Ask Yourself:

- How much time can you devote to school right now? Will that change in the future?
- Do you have family to support or take care of while you continue your education?
- Will you need to work while you are in school to support yourself/your family?
- Have you looked into all the possibilities for getting financial aid? If you are going to take out any educational loans, have you gotten professional advice from someone you can trust and who knows what they are talking about?
- Who can be part of your support system? (*This Toolkit offers ideas of some groups you can turn to for support.*)
- How will you pay for school? (*Learn more about financial aid and supportive services on pages 49-60.*)

step 6 Get assessed to determine your educational and learning needs.

An individualized assessment for your educational needs will help you make a strong plan to go back to school. Some schools and programs also require an educational assessment before you can enroll in classes.

Remember that completing your educational goals will always be a process of growth. It is never about where you started, but about getting to where you hope to be.

DETERMINING YOUR EDUCATIONAL LEVEL:

If you are not sure where to start in school, an “educational assessment” or “placement test” will help you figure this out. Also, if you have any special learning needs, differences, or disabilities, there are qualified professionals who can assess you and help you make an educational plan.

What is an educational assessment? An educational assessment (or “placement test”) is a tool that helps determine your current skill level in English, reading, writing, and math. Below are some of the common educational assessment tests for adults:

To test for your general knowledge and skill level (especially helpful if you have not finished high school):

- TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education)
- CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems)

To test for your readiness for community college-level English and math:

- Accuplacer (used by many community colleges in California)

These are tools that help identify the subjects you already know well, and those you need to work on to move forward with your educational goals.

WHERE CAN I GET AN ASSESSMENT?

If you took an educational assessment while you were in prison or jail, you can contact your facility to see if they still have it in your record.

If you cannot get this from facility staff, or it has been a long time since you took the assessment, you can try the following places for free or low-cost educational assessments:

- Five Keys: See [page 17](#) for more information.
- Local Public Library: <http://find-your-public-library.dp.la/>
- California Adult Schools: www.californiaadultschools.org
- California Adult Education Provider Directory: www.otan.us/caaeproviders
- California Council for Adult Education: www.ccaestate.org
- California Community College: <http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Findacollege> (Please note that community colleges require students to take a placement test to assess their readiness for college-level English and math.)



HELPFUL HINT IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY INCARCERATED:

- *If you are in prison:* State and federal prisons are supposed to give you an educational assessment or “placement test” to figure out your current educational level. If you do not receive one, ask a correctional counselor, case manager, or staff member in your facility’s education department.
- *If you are in county jail:* Many county jails offer educational assessment tests and some basic educational programs. Ask a staff member in your facility’s education department.

HIGHLIGHT: FIVE KEYS PROGRAM

Five Keys is a *free school* for adult students 16 years old and older. The school has educational programs in San Mateo, Solano, Alameda, San Bernardino, San Francisco, and Los Angeles county jails, and at more than 30 learning centers in the LA and SF areas. Five Keys has 70

community locations that offer free educational assessments, Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes, and GED testing classes. Below is a chart of their different service locations, and the phone numbers to contact to get involved in their services.

San Francisco County
415.734.3310 or 415.821.2400

1800 Oakdale Ave
Arriba Juntos
Bayview YMCA
CASC
CHALK
ECS Adult Education Center
Father Alfred’s
Friendship House
Glide Memorial
Healthright 360
Homeless Prenatal Program
Jericho Project
Learning Center Adult Probation
Mission Economic Development Agency
San Francisco Sheriff’s Department
Community Programs
TURF/Sunnydale Housing
Vis Valley Strong Family
Vis Valley The Village
Western Addition Success Center
Women’s Resource Center
Young Community Developers
Young Women’s Freedom Center

Los Angeles County
323.685.2782

Alhambra WorkSource
Amity
Boyle Heights Adult
Boyle Heights Youth Technology Center
Compton WorkSource
Covenant House
Dream Center
El Centro de Ayuda
El Monte WorkSource
First Place for Youth
Goodwill WorkSource
Healthright 360
HR360 El Monte
Hub Cities
Lancaster Five Keys
LGBT Center (The Village)
Pacoima WorkSource
Para Los Niños YouthSource - Family
Services
Para Los Niños YouthSource
Pasadena YouthBuild
Plaza del Sol
Pomona
Safe Place for Youth
SHIELDS Exodus
SHIELDS for Families
SHIELDS Jordan Downs
South LA Weber Community Center
Westlake Village Office
Wilshire Metro WorkSource

Alameda County
510.823.2165

BOSS - Oakland
First Place for Youth
Next Step Learning Center
Oakland Adult Probation (Oakland DRC)
OPIC
Rubicon Hayward
West Oakland Five Keys

San Bernardino County
323.627.5969

Fontana Day Reporting Center
San Bernardino Probation Department

San Mateo County
650.241.9833

JobTrain

Solano County
Vallejo - 415.517.1011
Fairfield - 415.516.0680 or 415.926.9775

Center for Positive Change Fairfield Probation
Center for Positive Change Vallejo Probation
Goodwill Vacaville

GETTING ASSESSED FOR LEARNING CHALLENGES AND DISABILITIES:

Everyone learns in their own way and at their own speed. But many of us have **learning differences or learning disabilities** that make going back to school even harder because it means our brains have trouble receiving, storing, processing, remembering, or communicating information the ways others do. Some have struggled in school their whole lives because of these learning challenges or disabilities—*not* because they were incapable or unintelligent.

Fortunately, there are now more resources and strategies than ever to support individuals with learning challenges and disabilities. If you have a disability, you have a *legal right* to **accommodations** (extra learning supports) in school.

Accommodations often include things like:

- Extra time to take tests.
- Using a calculator.
- Getting help with reading or writing.
- Getting notes from other students.

Find a professional to get assessed for learning challenges:

A professional can help you determine if you have a learning challenge or disability. Try the following resources:

- Ask your doctor or a psychologist. (If you have medical insurance like MediCal, this cost might be partly or completely covered by your insurance.)
- California’s Department of Rehabilitation: www.rehab.cahwnet.gov
- Local community mental health office: To find a nearby office, try the National Mental Health Locator at <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov>
- Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSPS) at your local community college
- Adult literacy/adult education programs
- Your school’s behavioral health or psychological services department

step 7 Collect identification documents and other records required for attending school.

GETTING IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS & RECORDS

Getting identification documents (ID), transcripts, and other important records allows you to enroll in school and apply for jobs. Use the checklist and steps below to make sure you have the documents you need.

Throughout the checklist, we flag **common issues that come up for system-impacted and formerly incarcerated students** in gathering these important documents.

Some very successful people with learning disabilities include:

Steve Jobs - Dyslexia

Former Apple CEO

Magic Johnson - Dyslexia

Former Laker and Businessman

Gavin Newsom - Dyslexia

Lieutenant Governor of California

Justin Timberlake - ADD and OCD

Musician

Steven Spielberg - Dyslexia

Movie Director

Harry Belafonte - Dyslexia

Musician and Activist

Danny Glover - Dyslexia

Actor

Whoopi Goldberg - Dyslexia

Actress and Comedian

If you need help, you can call Root & Rebound’s reentry legal hotline any Friday, 9 am - 5 pm PST, at 510-279-4662 for information about getting ID and navigating barriers. There is also a list of groups and resources that might be able to help you in [Appendix A](#), page 65.

1 Birth Certificate (Certified, Authorized Copy)

A birth certificate is often the first step to obtaining a number of important forms of ID. The fees for birth certificates are different in every county and state.

If you have your Birth Certificate, choose “YES” below. If not, choose “NO” and read about your options in California.

<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO...
	<p>If you were born in California, you can request an authorized, certified copy of your birth certificate from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) by mailing in an application on Form VS 111 (available online at https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/PSB/Pages/BirthDeathMarriageCertificates.aspx). Be sure to check the box requesting a <i>certified copy</i> (not a certified <i>informational</i> copy). Follow the form instructions, including sending a \$25 check, and expect a response in 3-6 weeks.</p> <p><i>For more information, see: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHSI/Pages/Vital-Records-Obtaining-Certified-Copies-of-Birth--Death-Records.aspx or the Roadmap to Reentry legal guide.</i></p> <p>If you know the county where you were born, you can also request your birth certificate from your County Recorder’s Office, which is usually quicker if done in person. Each county charges a different fee. To locate your local county recorder’s office, you can look it up online at https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHSI/Pages/County-Registrars-and-Recorders.aspx or call CDPH Customer Service at (916) 445-2684.</p> <p><i>For other situations (like being born in another state or country), find more information in the Roadmap to Reentry legal guide.</i></p>

2 Social Security Number/Card

Your **Social Security Number** is the second critical form of ID to obtain, as it is required for many elements of schooling, financial aid, employment, and other social services.

If you have a Social Security Number/Card, choose “YES” below. If not, choose “NO” and read about your options. We include helpful hints for people who are currently incarcerated and for people who are undocumented immigrants.

<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO...
	<p>To find a Social Security office near you, visit the website: https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp or call 211 for information. <i>(continued)</i></p>

HELPFUL HINTS FOR CURRENTLY INCARCERATED PEOPLE:

If you are currently incarcerated in California, only some facilities have agreements with the SSA to provide Social Security numbers and cards. Ask your correctional counselor for more information.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR UNDOCUMENTED PEOPLE WITHOUT A SSN:

Here are tips for addressing the following questions on a school/college application:

- 1. Social Security number (SSN)?** Simply skip this question. No other numbers, such as an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) or an Alien Number gained with DACA status, can be substituted.
- 2. Country of citizenship?** In California, the option “No Selection” is the recommended response for undocumented applicants, including those with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status. The “No Selection” response allows you to skip other questions about permanent residency and visa status that don’t apply to you.
- 3. Other forms of ID?** If you are in need of alternative ID for school, read more about your options in the *Roadmap to Reentry* “Building Blocks of Reentry: ID & Voting Rights” chapter, or contact an immigration lawyer (see referrals on pages 71-73).

Find more information for undocumented students here: <http://www.bestcolleges.com/resources/undocumented-students-guide/>

3 California State ID Card or Driver’s License

Your **state ID card** or **driver’s license** is an important document because it is an official government-issued photo ID that proves your age and identity, and may prove your legal presence in the U.S. You usually need one of

these to apply for jobs (and also to open a bank account and vote).

If you have your state ID card or driver’s license, choose “YES” below. If not, choose “NO” and read about your options.

YES

NO...

You will need to go to the DMV to get a state ID or driver’s license. You can get a reduced-fee state ID card if you receive public benefits, or a free one if you are a senior or homeless. A driver’s license costs \$33 (and you may have to fulfill other requirements like driving and vision tests, paying traffic court debt, and more). To find a DMV office near you, visit the website: <https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv/dmv/offices/findyourlocaloffice> or call 211 for information.

You can call Root & Rebound’s reentry legal hotline any Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. PST, to get legal information and guidance on getting ID in reentry.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR CURRENTLY INCARCERATED PEOPLE:

If you are currently incarcerated, you *cannot* apply for a driver’s license—you must wait until after you are released.

If you are currently incarcerated in state prison, you *may* be eligible to apply for a **state ID** card through the **CAL-ID Program**, provided to you FOR FREE when you are released. Requirements include: *(continued)*

- 1) Having previously had a California driver's license or state ID within the past 10 years
- 2) Having a photo on file with the DMV within the last 10 years
- 3) Having no warrants or detainers that could cause you to be brought back into custody
- 4) Not owing any DMV fees, and
- 5) Having a set release date that is 120-210 days away (4-7 months).

Unfortunately, lifers don't meet this last requirement. The CAL-ID program is not offered at contracted facilities (GSMCCF, DVMCCF, CVMCCF, SMCCF, TMCCF, DMCCF, FCRF).

4 Transcripts

If you completed any college courses inside prison or jail, submit a request for that college to send your transcript to the school you would like to attend. Providing transcripts can help to ensure that you don't lose any college credits you already earned! Keep in mind, different schools have different rules about the schools and programs from which they accept transfer credits. *(Learn more about transferring credits on page 45.)*

If you have not taken college-level courses yet, you will still need transcripts from high school (if you completed your high school diploma) or your high school equivalency certificate (like the GED, HiSET, or TASC in California) to apply to and enter a college in California.

If you have your school transcripts, choose "YES" below. If not, choose "NO" and read about your options.

<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO...
	<p>College courses: Contact the college(s) you attended (whether inside prison or jail or in the community) and ask them to send original transcripts to the new college you are trying to enter/transfer into. Ask whether the new college you are trying to transfer into will accept credits you have already earned from the college you attended previously.</p> <p>High school transcripts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you earned your <i>high school diploma</i>, contact your high school(s), or the school district(s), for an original transcript and let them know where it needs to be sent. • If you took a <i>high school equivalency test</i> like the GED, HiSET, or TASC, and successfully earned the certificate, get a copy of the certificate directly from the testing company. California's Adult Education Department provides links to do this online here: http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/gd/ • In order to determine how many <i>high school credits</i> you earned, you will need to obtain a copy of your academic transcript from your high school. The following resources will help you to obtain your transcript: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ To determine how many high school credits you earned while enrolled in public school, you may need to contact your school directly. If the school is closed, you should contact either the local school district or the county office of education. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(continued)</i></p>

- To determine how many high school credits you earned while enrolled in **private school**, you may need to contact your school directly. If the school is closed, the school’s “custodian of records” may be able to assist you. To locate the custodian information, you can search online using <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/si/ps/index.asp>, email an inquiry to privateschools@cde.ca.gov, or call the Private Schools Office at (916) 445-7331.
- To obtain transcript information from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation’s Division of Juvenile Justice (previously known as the California Youth Authority), check CDCR’s DJJ Transcripts and Certificates webpage at <http://www.bppe.ca.gov/students/transcripts.shtml> or inquire by phone at (916) 322-5759.

5 Immunization/Vaccination Records

You will need your **immunization/vaccination records** to register for school (and some jobs). These records prove that you received certain vaccines and medicines as a child for diseases like polio, chicken pox,

tuberculosis, and MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella).

If you have your immunization/vaccination records, choose “YES” below. If not, choose “NO” and read about your options.

YES

NO...

You may be able to get a copy by asking the medical office that gave you the childhood vaccinations; a parent or guardian; your elementary, high school or other school program’s health services office; previous employers that required immunizations; or a past correctional facility’s health care division.

If none of the above has your records, you can also try calling the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and asking if they have any records for you in the California Immunization Registry (CAIR) database. The CDPH is more likely to have immunization records from the 1990s or later. The CAIR Help Desk is available by phone: 1-800-578-7889, by fax: 1-888-436-8320, or by email: CAIRHelpDesk@cdph.ca.gov.

If you cannot find your immunization/vaccination records, talk to your medical doctor. It is generally safe to be vaccinated again. In some cases, your doctor may be able to give you a blood test to determine if you are already immune to a certain disease, and write you an official letter that confirms your immunity. Learn more about your options on the CDC’s website here: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/vaccination-records.html>.

6 References and Letters of Recommendation

Many school programs, colleges, and employers request **references with an application**. References should be employers, supervisors, teachers, or mentors who can describe your

relevant attributes and characteristics in a positive manner. References should be people you know well, but should NOT be family members.

<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO...
	<p>References typically consist of a list of names, each person's title, employer, contact information (email and phone number), and relationship to you.</p> <p>HELPFUL HINTS FOR FINDING STRONG REFERENCES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are currently incarcerated, a reference could be a teacher (academic or vocational instructor), religious leader, or program volunteer. • Always ask for the person's permission before listing them as a reference. If you need a reference to write a letter of recommendation for you, you should ask them several weeks before the final letter is due. Provide your references information about the school, program, or job to which you are applying so they can write a stronger letter. Also provide references with the contact person and/or address where the letter should be sent, and the deadline for submitting it. <p>Sometimes, a school, program, or employer will ask for your references to provide letters of recommendation. A letter of recommendation is written by a previous employer, colleague, client, teacher, or by someone else who can vouch for your skills, achievements, excellence, and aptitude.</p>

7 Selective Service Registration *(Very important for getting financial aid for school!)*

If you are a male between the ages of 18 and 25 and live in the U.S., you are required to register for the Selective Service before your 26th birthday. This program provides the Federal Government with a list of men to enlist for military service in the case of a national emergency.

OR that you meet one of their exceptions—in order to get federal financial aid including Pell Grants, Federal Work Study, and Stafford Loans, as well as most types of state financial aid.

How does Selective Service registration affect my financial aid applications?

- If you are currently between 18-25 and you are applying for federal and state financial aid for college, you are in luck—you can easily register for the Selective Service through the federal “FAFSA” form (more on that below).

- If you are a male, age 26 or older, you need to show proof of Selective Service registration—

 **HELPFUL HINT: NOT SURE IF YOU'RE REGISTERED?** You can check your Selective Service status and print out a verification letter online at www.sss.gov, by calling 1-847-688-6888, or by mailing a request to: Selective Service System, P.O. Box 94638, Palatine, IL 60094-4638.

If you are registered, choose “YES” below. If not, choose “NO” below and read through the options.

<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO...
	<p>REGISTERING FOR THE FIRST TIME: Before your 26th birthday, you are allowed to register for the Selective Service online at sss.gov, or by mailing the registration form to: Selective Service System, P.O. Box 94638, Palatine, IL 60094-4638. <i>(continued)</i></p>

The registration form is available at most U.S. Postal Offices. If you are 18-25, you can also register at the same time as you apply to federal financial aid by choosing the right boxes on the “**FAFSA**” form. Learn more about applying for federal financial aid through the FAFSA at: <http://www.finaid.org/fafsa/> and <http://www.finaid.org/fafsa/fafsa.html>. We also have more information on financial aid on [page 49](#) of this toolkit.

Requesting a status information letter if you were incarcerated between the ages of 18 and 25: You can call or write the Selective Service to request a **Status Information Letter** to prove that you were incarcerated, institutionalized, and/or hospitalized from ages 18 through 25. You will need to describe ALL the circumstances that prevented you from registering during that time, and have copies of documents showing all the dates you were confined. If you are requesting a Status Information Letter because you failed to register for other reasons, you must explain these reasons on the request form.

You can request a Status Information Letter by calling 1-847-688-6888 and waiting for an operator or by mailing a completed request form (found online at <https://www.sss.gov/Portals/0/PDFs/Status.pdf>) to Selective Service System, P.O. Box 94638, Palatine, Illinois, 60094-4638.

Learn about other situations that excuse you from registering, and situations where you don't need a status information letter: Find much more information online at <https://www.sss.gov/Registration/Status-Information-Letter>.

8

Getting a Copy of Your Criminal Record—and cleaning up what you can.

Next, we add one more suggestion for preparing to go back to school... getting a copy of your criminal record. This can be an important first step to reduce the effect of your conviction history on your education and career goals. But you don't have to actually do this *before* you go back to school—you can do it any time! That said, we recommend looking into record-cleaning while you are in school and well before you apply for jobs, if possible!

Why do I need a copy of my RAP sheet?

Your criminal record or “RAP sheet” is an important document for many reasons:

- It shows you your conviction history so you can research the impact on your education and career goals.
- RAP sheets often contain mistakes, so it is smart to get a copy and correct any mistakes *before* you start applying to jobs. Background check companies pull certain information from your RAP sheet and court records to report to employers, landlords, and even some schools—so if there are errors, those people will also receive inaccurate information.



WHAT IS A RAP SHEET/ CRIMINAL RECORD?

A “**RAP sheet**” (**R**ecord of **A**rrests and **P**rosecutions) is the government's official record of all the contact you have had with the criminal justice system: arrests, convictions (felonies and misdemeanors), infractions, and information about sentences (like jail or prison time; probation time; fines and fees; etc.).

- Getting your RAP sheet is also the first step toward having a reentry lawyer help “clean up” your record where possible. If you have already started the legal process of cleaning up old convictions, you can also get a copy of your RAP sheet to make sure it was updated to show those positive changes!

Fortunately, in California, our public colleges and universities don’t ask about criminal history. California Community Colleges, California State University (CSU), and the University of California (UC) campuses do not ask about an applicant’s criminal history on their applications.



HELPFUL HINT: Different government agencies keep different information about your past contact with the criminal justice system.

- County courts keep local county court records, which lists only arrests and convictions that happened in that county.
- The California Department of Justice (DOJ) keeps state RAP sheets, which lists all arrests and convictions that happened in California. If you have had contact with the criminal justice system in more than one county, or you’re not 100% sure, then you should always request your state DOJ RAP sheet.
- The FBI keeps federal RAP sheets, also called *Identity History Summaries*, which lists all federal arrests or convictions as well as all arrests and convictions that happened anywhere in the United States.

Below, learn about the **2 key steps** to getting your record, fixing errors, and record-cleaning.

STEP 1: GET YOUR RAP SHEET/CRIMINAL RECORD.

If you have your RAP sheet, check “YES” below. If not, choose “NO” below and learn the steps to get a copy.

<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO...
	<p>How to Get a Copy of your RAP Sheet/Criminal Record:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Go to a LiveScan provider. To find the closest LiveScan facility, go to https://oag.ca.gov/fingerprints/locations. At that site, click on your county of residence to be directed to the list of locations near you. The list of locations will include the processing fee for each location. The LiveScan processing fee varies by location, ranging from \$20-160. 2. In addition to the LiveScan processing fee, you will need to pay the fee set by the Department of Justice, which is typically \$32, to get your state RAP sheet. The fee to get your federal RAP sheet (with all state and federal arrest and conviction histories) is set by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and costs \$15-17. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(continued)</i></p>

3. At the LiveScan location, you will fill out an application to obtain your RAP Sheet, pay fees to apply for your RAP Sheet, and get fingerprinted. Your application and fingerprints will be submitted to the Department of Justice, which will pull your RAP Sheet and send it to the address you provided on your application. It can take up to three months for the Department of Justice to send you your RAP Sheet.

Another way to obtain your RAP Sheet is to go to a record cleaning event in your area that offers LiveScan services.

STEP 2: CLEAN UP YOUR CRIMINAL RECORD.

Once you have your RAP Sheet, find a record cleaning (or “clean slate”) clinic in your area. You can search online for clinics, call the local Public Defender’s office (the number should be readily available online with a search such as “[county where conviction occurred] County Public Defender’s Office”), or call Root & Rebound’s legal hotline any Friday at 510-279-4662 to find the clinic nearest you.

At a record cleaning or “clean slate” clinic, a lawyer will review your RAP sheet and help figure out whether: (1) any of your convictions can be reduced from felonies to misdemeanors

or misdemeanors to infractions; (2) any convictions can be dismissed (often called “expunged”); (3) you are eligible to apply for a Certificate of Rehabilitation for a conviction that sent you to prison; and (4) you can avoid negative immigration consequences stemming from a conviction where you weren’t properly warned about the impact of that conviction on your immigration status.

Please note: The best record cleaning clinic will screen you for ALL of the things listed here, so feel free to ask if you aren’t sure what they are screening you for.

a *reentry lawyer* can help you with the following:

Fixing Errors in your RAP Sheet.

Dismissals:

By getting a dismissal (sometimes called “expungement”), it prevents most private employers and landlords from ever seeing that conviction in a background check. It also shows you have taken steps toward rehabilitation if you ever need to prove this to a court, licensing board, or government agency.

Reducing the Severity of Convictions:

Reductions can change certain *felonies to misdemeanors* and certain *misdemeanors to infractions*. This makes the conviction less serious if it’s being considered by a school, employer, licensing board, or landlord. Reducing convictions may also remove some barriers to public benefits or restore your right to serve on a jury.

Certificates of Rehabilitation:

If you have served time in state prison, and were released 7+ years ago, you may be eligible for a Certificate of Rehabilitation (COR). A COR can open up educational and employment opportunities.

Governor’s Pardon:

If you have applied for and been granted a COR, you will be automatically considered for a pardon by the Governor of California. If you cannot apply for a COR, you can still apply directly to the Governor’s Office for a pardon.

Federal Convictions:

Unfortunately, federal law does not provide for record-cleaning remedies like a dismissal, a reduction, or a Certificate of Rehabilitation. For federal offenses, make sure the information is accurate in your federal RAP Sheet and fix any errors. You can also apply for a presidential pardon, although they are rare.

Out-of-State Convictions:

California courts do not provide any record-cleaning remedies for convictions in other states. Instead, you will have to go through the state where the conviction happened. To find out what you can do in other states, call your criminal defense attorney in that state or the local public defender’s office where that conviction occurred.



There is much more information about the process of getting your RAP sheet, fixing errors, and cleaning up old convictions (where possible) in our [Roadmap to Reentry legal guide](#). You can also call [Root & Rebound’s reentry legal hotline](#) any Friday at 510-279-4662 for help.



ii.

EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS & PATHWAYS

SUMMARY - SECTION 2

Not everyone starts or finishes their educational journey in the same place. This Section provides information about the **different levels of education** to help you decide the best pathway based on your goals. Learn about the following educational options:

- **Adult Basic Education (ABE) & English as a Second Language (ESL):** ABE is geared towards adults who would like to build their skills in basic English, reading, writing, and math. ESL is for students who are looking to improve their English as a native speaker of a different language. ([page 29](#))
- **Earning Your High School Equivalency Certificate or High School Diploma:** includes information on which one is right for you, and resources to prepare you for the GED or other high school equivalency exam. ([page 30](#))
- **Career and Technical Education (Vocational School or CTE):** CTE is an alternative to a traditional college degree, and provides training designed for a specific trade or career. A CTE can result in a college degree or certificate. ([page 34](#))
- **Going to College:** Learn practical tips for attending college, what a college degree offers you, and how to transfer credits you have already earned. ([page 38](#))
- **Continuing Education After College: Graduate or Professional School and Advanced Degrees:** This section informs you about the application process and different graduate and professional options after college. ([page 46](#))



TOOLKIT ROADMAP:

- » If you are not sure where to start in school, go back to Section 1 to learn about setting educational goals and getting assessed ([page 10](#)).
- » Talk to a trusted advisor before making any big decisions! (See [Appendix A](#), pages 65-66 for ideas of who can support you on your journey.)

adult basic education (ABE) & english as a second language (ESL)

WHO IS ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE) FOR?

If you are an adult who never attended high school and are not ready for the GED, you can start with Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes. ABE is for adults who want to gain basic skills and knowledge in English, reading, writing, and math.

English as a Second Language: ABE classes can also include English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to improve your English if it is not your first language.

In California, ABE is typically offered through K-12 adult school programs, community colleges, libraries, and some nonprofits.

Learn more about ABE at the California Department of Education's website located at the following link: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ae/>, and see the list below to find an ABE program near you.

HOW DO I DECIDE IF ABE OR ESL IS RIGHT FOR ME?

If you want to continue your education, but are unsure of whether your reading, writing, and/or math skills are at a high school level yet, the ABE may be right for you. Similarly, if you believe you could benefit from more instruction in the English language, ESL may be right for you.

COST OF ABE:

After release, you can find free or low-cost ABE classes at many adult schools and community colleges. Ask the school or program about what financial aid they offer, and whether they cover the costs of any books or materials.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO COMPLETE ABE?

The length of time it takes to complete ABE is different for every individual, depending on your educational level and educational needs. Talk to the specific program and instructor if you would like support with scheduling and planning your time.

FIND AN ABE PROGRAM:

- For questions, call the California **Adult Education Office** at (916) 322-2175, or visit the following page for a list of regional consultants: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ae/po/directory.asp>
- Find an ABE program near you by typing in your zip code online at: <http://www.otan.us/caaeproviders/>.
- **Five Keys Program:** Five Keys is a non-profit that provides *free school* for adult students 17 years old and older, including free educational assessments, Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes, and GED testing classes. See page 17 for their contact information.



HELPFUL HINT: If you are currently incarcerated:

ABE classes are offered for free in county jails and state and federal prisons in California.

- In federal prison, it is part of the "Adult Continuing Education" or ACE program, which may require you to take ESL classes if you are not fluent in English.
- In California state prisons, you have to take an assessment test called "TABE" to enroll in ABE, and the prison may require you to take ESL classes if you are not fluent in English.

Ask about what ABE classes and other educational programs are available in your prison or county jail.

earning your high school equivalency (HSE) certificate or high school diploma

WHO ARE HIGH SCHOOL-LEVEL CLASSES FOR?

Earning a California high school equivalency certificate (HSE) or high school diploma (HSD) will help you apply to colleges, vocational schools, or jobs that require high school-level education.

A high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate may also increase the amount of money you can earn. Keep reading to decide the best path for you.

Here are tips to help you decide if you should get a high school diploma or HSE certificate:

- If you haven't taken any high school classes, or if you have taken very few high school classes, earning a California **high school equivalency certificate** (HSE) is probably the best option. It takes about 6 months to study for and take a state-approved HSE test (either the **GED test**, **HiSET test**, or **TASC test**). Learn more about HSE tests on page 31.
- If you are just a few credits short of your **high school diploma**, it may be best to complete a traditional high school diploma. Learn more about getting your high school diploma on page 32. To find out how many high school credits you have completed, see the Transcripts section on pages 21-22.
- **If you are not ready to take high-school level classes**, that is totally fine! Instead, you may want to see what adult basic education (ABE) classes can help you get ready. Learn more about ABE classes on page 29.



For guidance, you can contact the California Department of Education's "Adult Education Division" at phone number 916-322-2175 or the nonprofit Five Keys (more information and phone numbers on [page 17](#)).



HELPFUL HINT:

"Dual Enrollment" in a High School or HSE and Community College:

If you are interested in getting your high school credential at the same time you take community college classes, below are a few tips:

- Each community college is different. Some allow you to take classes towards your high school diploma or HSE certificate at the same time you take college-level classes (called "**dual enrollment**"), and others do not.
- At the schools that offer dual enrollment, your high school-level classes generally don't earn you credits towards your college degree, but you might be able to take them at the same time as credit-earning college-level classes.
- Although it is not required to have a high school diploma or HSE certificate to go to community college in California, it is usually a good idea to be prepared for college-level courses. Most students finish their high school diploma or HSE certificate **BEFORE** taking any credit-earning college classes.
- **Note that typically a student must be under 18 to enroll in high school. This may affect your ability to dual enroll.**
- Ask an academic counselor for advice specific to your situation!

Below you will find more information about getting a high school equivalency (HSE) certificate or a high school diploma, depending on what makes sense for your situation.

1 California High School Equivalency (HSE) Certificate

WHO IS THE HSE CERTIFICATE FOR?

A high school equivalency (HSE) certificate is for individuals who will not complete a traditional high school diploma.

HOW DO I DECIDE IF A CALIFORNIA HSE CERTIFICATE IS RIGHT FOR ME?

If you have taken just a few high school classes, or no classes at all, a California HSE certificate may be for you. This Certificate will stand in the place of a traditional high school diploma, and will open the door to the same opportunities as a traditional diploma.

COST OF HSE TEST PREPARATION PROGRAM & CERTIFICATE:

There are many HSE test preparation programs (both online and in-person in a classroom) that charge a low fee, but there are also many **free** HSE test programs!

Please see [page 32](#) for examples of prices for GED and information about finding out pricing for other exams.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO COMPLETE A HSE CERTIFICATE?

Studying for and taking a HSE test (like the GED, HiSET, or TASC) takes about 3-6 months. This will depend on what knowledge and skills you already have in the tested subject areas, as well as the amount of time you have available to study.

HOW TO GET A CA HSE CERTIFICATE:

To get your HSE certificate in California, you must take an approved test. The California Department of Education has approved three tests to get high school equivalency: the GED, the HiSET, and the TASC. You can learn more about California's requirements for receiving a high school equivalency certificate here: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/gd/>.

FIND AN HSE TEST PROGRAM:

- Before enrolling and spending money for HSE Test preparation, take advantage of the many free programs available through the **California Adult Education Provider Directory** found online here: <http://www.otan.us/caaeproviders/> (type in your zip code to search for schools near you).
- You can also contact the nonprofit **Five Keys** to see if they offer a free HSE Test program near you. Learn more about Five Keys' schools on [page 17](#).
- *Always call the school or program you are interested in to get more information about cost, financial aid, and scholarships!*



HELPFUL HINT: Protect yourself from HSE testing scams!

If you are considering taking the GED, HiSET, or TASC high school equivalency test, please be aware of the following:

- The California Department of Education (CDE) has approved only three test companies for getting your HSE certificate in California: **GED**, **HiSET**, and **TASC**.
- Any test must be taken in person and can only be taken at an official Testing Center. The links below can help you find an official testing center near you:
 - **Find a GED test center:** <https://www.gedtestingservice.com/testers/locate-a-testing-center>
 - **Find a HiSET test center:** <https://ereg.ets.org/ereg/public/testcenter/search?p=HSE>
 - **Find a TASC test center:** <https://california.tasctest.com/>
- **Although some test preparation programs hand out “diplomas or certificates” of program completion, these documents ARE NOT real high school equivalency credentials.**

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE GED TEST IN CALIFORNIA

Since the GED test is the most popular high school equivalency (HSE) test in California, we go into more detail about it here. Learn more about the other tests on their websites.

The **GED**, or **General Educational Development** test, is for adults age 18 or older (or 17 in special cases), who never completed high school and want to earn a high school equivalency certificate. The GED tests your knowledge and skills in four subjects: Language Arts (reading and writing), Math, Science, and Social Studies.

COST TO GET YOUR GED:

- Cost of GED Prep Classes: Many programs offer free classes to prepare for the GED. If you are incarcerated, request access to such a class through your corrections counselor.
- Cost of GED Test: If you are taking the GED test in California, there is a fee of **\$140** to take all four GED subject tests,

or **\$35** per subject if you take them one at a time. Many adult schools and some community colleges in California offer GED classes, materials, and the test for free or at a low cost, and some have financial aid and scholarships if you can't afford the cost.

Ask the school about its costs before you enroll!

SIGNING UP FOR THE GED TEST:

- Sign up at www.ged.com, choose a specific test date and test center, and pay the \$35 fee for each subject matter.
- To find a testing center near you, call the GED Testing Service at 1-800-626-9433, or look online at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/gd/gedtestcntrs.asp>, or on www.ged.com.

2 California High School Diploma (if it makes sense for you)

WHO IS A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA FOR?

It may make sense for you to continue working towards a **high school diploma** if you are under the age of 18 OR if you have already taken most of the high school classes you need to get your diploma (for example, if you are only 6 credits short).

That said, many formerly incarcerated students never got the chance to complete any or all of their high school credits, so completing a high school equivalency (HSE) certificate would be a better fit. Learn more about HSE and exams like the GED on [pages 31-32](#).

The California Department of Education has published helpful information about high school diploma requirements online here: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/hsgrfaq.asp>.

HOW DO I DECIDE IF A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA IS RIGHT FOR ME?

If you are under the age of 18 or have most of the high school classes you need for your diploma, a high school diploma may be right for you. If you are older than 18 and have not taken many (or any) high school classes, please see page 31 for more information on an HSE.

COST OF HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA:

By law, getting your high school diploma in California must be free.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO GET A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA?

It takes 4 years if you are attending full-time to complete a high school diploma. If you are just a few credits short of earning your diploma, talk with an academic advisor or call California's Adult Education Office with questions at (916) 322-2175 for information and advice on what to do.

FIND A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROGRAM:

- High school diploma programs are offered in many of the jails and prisons, adult schools, and community colleges throughout California.
- In most **adult high school diploma programs**, you can choose to enroll in traditional classes, or complete courses at your own pace through individual study and regular check-ins with teachers.



HELPFUL HINT: Protect yourself from high school diploma scams!

In recent years, the federal government has shut down several programs that were charging money for fake diplomas. To avoid these scams, watch out for the following:

The program seems too good to be true. Getting a high school diploma requires time and effort. If a program lets you get a diploma without taking classes or tests, it is probably fake.

The program offers free tests or classes, but charges for the diploma itself. This is a big sign that the program is a scam.

The program claims to be affiliated with the federal government. The federal government does not offer high school diploma programs. Only the states can approve official high school diploma programs.

HELPFUL HINT: If you are currently incarcerated:

High school diploma programs are offered in many jails and prisons. Ask your correctional staff and/or education department at your facility for more information about finishing high school while incarcerated. Some facilities only offer GED/high school equivalency programs (learn more about HSE on [page 31](#)). If it is not offered, you can also take correspondence courses or distance learning, but these require you to pay program fees and buy your own materials.

HELPFUL HINT: Research possible licensing barriers:

If you have completed a high school diploma or equivalency certificate, and are exploring higher education (like vocational programs, college, or graduate school), then now is an important time to research any **job or licensing barriers** you may face. More information about occupational licensing can be found on pages 13-15 and in [Appendix D](#), page 70.

career and technical education

(CTE or “Vocational School”)

Career and technical education (CTE or “vocational school”) prepares you to work in a specific industry.

WHO IS CTE FOR?

If you are looking for tailored training for your desired career, Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs can provide that training. CTE is sometimes called vocational, technical, or occupational school.

CTE can be a good path if you want to gain practical skills and enter the workforce at a living wage more quickly. A good CTE program should be designed to get you certified, licensed, and/or hired in your chosen field right out of school.

But beware... Most CTE programs *do not screen you for your criminal record*—so it is important to research potential barriers before you begin a CTE or vocational program.

For more information about barriers to a particular job field or certificate, call Root & Rebound’s reentry legal hotline, any Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. PST, at 510-279-4662.

HOW DO I DECIDE IF CTE OR VOCATIONAL SCHOOL IS FOR ME?

If you have a clear idea of the particular vocation or trade you wish to perform, and if CTE or vocational school provides a more efficient path to the necessary skills, license, or certification for that career, CTE or vocational school may be right for you.

COST OF CTE/VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS:

The cost of CTE or vocational programs can vary widely, but community colleges typically provide less expensive training than for-profit schools and programs. Read more about community colleges on page 41. Beware of for-profit CTE/vocational/certificate programs that charge a lot of money. These companies often don’t provide any advice on the front-end about barriers you will face pursuing a career in your chosen industry due to your record, and care more about making money.

HOW TO FIND A CTE PROGRAM:

- In California, CTE programs are offered at many community colleges, trade schools, and some 4-year colleges and universities. Community college is usually the most affordable option (see more about finding and contacting your local California community college on [page 41](#)).
- To learn more about CTE programs offered by the California Department of Education (CDE), you can call the CDE’s Career and College Transition Division at 916-445-2652, and look online at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/>.



HELPFUL HINT: A CTE Certificate vs. a College Degree:

Most CTE programs lead students to getting a **certificate**, *not* a **college degree**. A certificate is an award that shows you completed special training for a specific career after high school. Sometimes you can transfer CTE credits towards a college degree—check with the college you wish to attend to see if CTE/vocational credits can transfer over.



HELPFUL HINT: Get real-world job experience in school through **internships** (usually unpaid) or **apprenticeships** (usually paid training for trade-skills) to improve your resume and improve your chances of employment. Even **volunteer opportunities** are important skill-building opportunities while you are in school or looking for work.



Is high school required to go to college or vocational school?

Many college programs require that you already have a high school diploma or high school equivalency (HSE) certificate, **but not all**.

In California, you can test out of the high school requirement by taking the California High School Proficiency Exam (learn more here: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sp/chspefaq.asp>), but you should contact the college you want to attend ahead of time to see if they will accept this. Some colleges and certain majors will require a high school diploma or HSE certificate.

You can contact the college you are interested in to see if it offers any “dual enrollment” programs where you can take free or low-cost “non-credit earning” classes in adult basic education (ABE), high school equivalency (HSE) or a high school diploma (HSD), at the same time you take credit-earning college-level classes. Some colleges offer this in California, but not all.

California law requires vocational school applicants to have a high school diploma, an equivalent, or a passing score on a so-called “ability-to-benefit” examination. However, an ongoing lawsuit is challenging this requirement. For more on this lawsuit, entitled Pacific Coast Horseshoeing School, Inc. v. Grafilo, see this link: <http://ij.org/case/california-trade-schools/>.

“how I did it”

A letter to readers by **Danny Murillo**, *Soros Justice Advocacy Fellow at the Opportunity Institute*, on going from prison to college success:

I recognize those who are coming home will have a different set of experiences and challenges from mine. I can only speak on my experience as a formerly incarcerated person who served a fourteen-year sentence. In 2007, after I completed my GED certificate I enrolled in a college correspondence program while in the Security Housing Unit (SHU) at Pelican Bay State Prison. My goal was to complete the Certificate of Accomplishment in General Business. However, with the encouragement from a friend in the SHU, I decided to pursue my Associates of Arts (AA) degree.

Although, I did not complete my AA degree prior to paroling I decided to make higher education my priority upon release. I set my mind on completing my AA degree in Social and Behavioral Science, and I wanted to volunteer with community organizations working with marginalized youth or formerly incarcerated people. The AA degree and the volunteer work were opportunities to open doors that would not be easily accessible with my conviction history. I had to figure out ways to mitigate the barriers that I would encounter upon my release; such as, denial of employment, housing and social services.

Not long after I paroled a childhood friend assisted me in applying for admission, financial aid and the placement test at Cerritos College. Enrolling at Cerritos College gave my life structure similar to prison, but without the physical, spiritual, and psychological torture that comes with being incarcerated. It was within this structured environment that I was able to create a program/routine that

revolved around my classes, work and building relationships with faculty and staff. This program allowed to excel and continue to develop my critical thinking skills, which have been instrumental in my transformation.

However, I still had to face certain challenges that were a hindrance in my pursuit of higher education. For instance, I was unable to find a decent job with a flexible work schedule, which would allow me to continue going to school. After explaining to my English professor that I am unable to find employment because of my conviction, she offered to hire me through the federal work-study program. Unfortunately during the hiring process I was required to check the box that asks “have you ever been convicted of a felony?” After I submitted the job application, human resources was making an issue of my past conviction. However, my professor, counselor and mentor advocated on my behalf and eventually I was hired. This experience taught me the importance of networking and building relationships with administrators, faculty, staff and students on campus. You never know when someone will be in a position to help you out down the road.

Coming from an academic setting in prison to Cerritos College was a significant transition. During my first semester at Cerritos, I participated in the Puente Project. Puente is a statewide program co-sponsored by the University of California and the California Community College Chancellor’s Office. The program is designed to introduce and encourage first-generation and low income students to transfer to University of California system. Puente exposed me to three key

relationships, my English professor, Academic Counselor and mentor, each of which played a critical role in my development as a student and most importantly as a human being. When I was at Cerritos College, I took every opportunity to connect with them. In addition, the personal connections that were created with the staff and faculty in the writing center made my transition as a formerly incarcerated person easier to deal with, and to be able to move forward with my life. I often asked myself: what do I need to do to be able to move forward? My answer was that I needed to build a support system around me of

I often asked myself: what do I need to do to be able to move forward?

individuals that would become my mentors and role models, something that was lacking throughout my childhood. This idea of a support system has played a crucial role in my success as a student in the correspondence program in the SHU and at Cerritos College.

During my time at Cerritos College I was involved in student government, in the Honors Scholars program and the Transfer program, I was enrolled in the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), and I was engaged in student organizing. As the Co-President of the Puente Club and I participated in several leadership conferences. Moreover, we organized events to educate the student body regarding transferring to UC system. These experiences have allowed me to build meaningful relationships amongst my peers as well campus and community leaders.

I graduated from Cerritos College in the Spring 2012 with an Associate of Arts degree in Spanish and transferred to the University of California, Berkeley in the Fall 2012. Since my arrival to UC Berkeley I have participated in different projects, events, and activities, which have all addressed access to

education for those who are currently and formerly incarcerated. While at UC Berkeley, I co-founded the Underground Scholars Initiative (USI) a student organization of formerly incarcerated students. The mission of the USI is to increase awareness on the UC Berkeley campus regarding cycles of incarceration, and actively participating in creating alternatives to criminalization and incarceration through education. There are three main components to the USI model and that's recruitment, retention and policy advocacy. One of our recruitment methods is the correspondence program with incarcerated students; our retention program consist of hiring writing tutors to work specifically with our student population; lastly one our recent victories through our policy work was getting the University of California to "Ban the Box" from the employment application.

I graduated from the UC Berkeley with a Bachelors in Arts degree in Ethnic Studies and was awarded the 2015 John W. Gardner Fellowship for Public Service. Through the Gardner Fellowship I went to work, for ten months, at the Vera Institute of Justice in New York City and the New Jersey Scholarship and Transformative Education in Prison at Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey.

I am currently the 2016 Soros Justice Advocacy Fellow at the Opportunity Institute in Berkeley, California. My goal is to empower formerly incarcerated students by creating a statewide network of people who have successfully made the transition from incarceration into higher education. Higher education exposed me to other resources and opportunities; such as, employment, housing, scholarships and community organizing. I want to collaborate with other formerly incarcerated people in order to build a prison to school pipeline that puts higher education in conversation with other reentry resources.

going to college

WHO IS COLLEGE FOR?

With a college education, you can seek academic training and develop knowledge that will help you succeed in any career you choose.

In college, you gain experience in writing, researching, critical thinking, and communication, as well as more advanced

knowledge and skills in specific subject areas. The area in which you choose to focus your college studies is called a **major**. Popular majors include things like sociology, political science, biology, history, English, engineering, and fine arts.

HOW DO I DECIDE IF I SHOULD GO TO COLLEGE?

Choosing whether to enroll in college is a personal decision. Turn to trusted advisors (*some ideas listed in Appendix A*) to help you make the best choice based on your needs, circumstances, and goals. Know that if you do choose to go to college, the journey will be hard, but the rewards and sense of accomplishment can never be taken from you.

Here are some of the things a college degree offers you:

- Preparation for a larger number of careers than high school or CTE.
- Better chances of getting hired at most jobs.
- Increased lifetime earning capacity.

- Social and professional networks gained through fellow students, faculty, and internships.
- Classes that develop strong reading, writing, and analytical skills.
- The ability to explore many different areas of study.
- Preparation for graduate or professional school, if that is of interest to you (learn more on [page 46](#)).

There are also an increasing number of campus groups and programs designed specifically to support formerly incarcerated students. See below.

Find (or Start!) a College Group for Formerly Incarcerated and System Impacted Students

Over the past few years, there has been more attention and funding given to campus groups created specifically to support formerly incarcerated students with applying to college and succeeding on campus.

These campus groups offer things like:

- Support with your admissions packet and gathering the things you need to apply to that school.
- Help filling out financial aid applications like the FAFSA.
- A social network of students and faculty who understand many of the experiences and concerns that system impacted students have in going to college, and who want you to succeed.
- A campus liaison between the school and the program, meaning someone employed by the school whose job it is to be a point of communication between the administration and formerly incarcerated students.
- Sometimes these programs have their own funds to help with the costs of books, transportation, and food.
- To find schools with these programs for formerly incarcerated students, use the search tool on www.correctionstocollegeca.org. This website was created by the nonprofit Opportunity Institute to provide information and resources to help system impacted students apply to and succeed in college!

SPOTLIGHT: PROJECT REBOUND

Project Rebound is a special admissions program that helps formerly incarcerated individuals wanting to enter the California State University (CSU) system, including the following schools: San Francisco, San Bernardino, Bakersfield, Fullerton, Pomona, Sacramento, Fresno, and San Diego. The program offers special admissions for men and women who might not normally qualify for university acceptance because of application deadlines and minor academic deficiencies. Project Rebound also offers a liaison with campus services and programs as well as with community organizations in order to serve as an advocate for people on campus and in the community. By offering resources and connections with supportive entities, Project Rebound attempts to help students with their basic needs so that they can concentrate on gaining expertise in their field of study and achieve educational and personal empowerment. *Find contact information for each campus in [Appendix A](#) on page 65.*

TYPES OF COLLEGE DEGREES:

If you decide to pursue college, you can work towards an Associate Degree (60 credits or two years of full-time coursework) or a Bachelor's Degree (120 credits or four years of full-time coursework). There are also many options to go to college part-time, however these will require you to spend extra time completing your degree. We suggest you go to a trusted advisor for advice (see [Appendix A](#), pages 65-66, for ideas).

On the next page is a chart that breaks down the key differences between an Associate Degree and Bachelor's Degree.

“**As someone who grew up in Oakland, I know a lot of students who are impacted by incarceration. Having been incarcerated myself, I disclose that now when I go into college classes to share about the campus programs I work with that support previously incarcerated and impacted students. I think the first step is that we need more sensitivity on campus. I also do my best to soften the politics of disclosure by being open about my own past. We will lose students if there isn't a more loving, caring and welcoming atmosphere.**”

- VINCE GARRETT, PROGRAMS OUTREACH AND RETENTION SPECIALIST AT LANEY COLLEGE - RESTORING OUR COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE; AND FORMER STREET SCHOLAR AT MERRITT COLLEGE AND UNDERGROUND SCHOLAR AT UC BERKELEY

TYPES OF COLLEGE DEGREES

Associate Degree (Community College)

An Associate Degree is earned in a minimum of 2 years, but usually takes closer to 3 years in California. It allows you to complete a significant amount of college coursework, opening up more career options to you.

There are different types of Associate Degrees:

- Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) — These are more general academic degrees.
- Associate of Applied Arts (AAA) or Associate of Applied Science (ASA) — These are more technical skill-based degrees to enter a specific industry.
- Associate in Art for Transfer (AA-T) or Associate in Science for Transfer (AS-T) — These are degrees that **guarantee priority admission** to some CSU campuses and can boost your application if you apply to a UC (but don't guarantee admission to a UC). **If you are interested in transferring from community college to a four-year CSU or UC, let your school know so they put you on the "transfer track."** Learn more here: <http://adegreewithaguarantee.com/>

Bachelor's Degree (4-Year College or University)

A Bachelor's Degree is offered at four-year colleges and universities (though some students take five or more years to complete it). It is required for many high-paying jobs, as well for attending graduate school.

There are different types of Bachelor's Degrees:

- Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) — This degree is generally awarded for the completion of study in general education or liberal arts courses.
- Bachelor of Science (B.S.) — This degree tends to be more focused on completion of study in the technical aspects of physical sciences, such as engineering or computer science.
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) — This degree is for students seeking a professional education in visual or performance arts.
- Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) — This degree is usually awarded in a technical or applied professional area -- such as engineering, electronics, management, or IT.)

COST OF COLLEGE:

On the following pages, we go into more details about the costs of college, which can vary greatly from school to school. As a warning, private colleges cost a lot more money than public colleges and universities.

WARNING: PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC COLLEGES

California's public colleges and universities (which includes the California Community Colleges, California State Universities, University of California schools) provide more financial aid to students, enroll more students over the age of 25 and students from low-income backgrounds, and have a more diverse student body. They are all *non-profit schools*.

Private colleges in California can be much more expensive. If you are considering a private college, make sure it is 1) a *non-profit* private college, 2) a member of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (AICCU), and 3) accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). (Please note: California also has many *for-profit* colleges, which we do not address here.)

community college

Earn your Associate Degree ● ● ● ● ●

WHO IS COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOR?

For students who have not been to school in awhile, community college is the most common place to start on your college journey. Because community colleges have low tuition and more flexibility than 4-year colleges, they are often an ideal place to start in reentry. In community

college, you can earn your Associate Degree, or join the Associate-for-Transfer track if you want to later transfer into a four-year college or university and earn your Bachelor's Degree. Both are very worthy pursuits!



HELPFUL HINT:

Some community colleges also offer “*dual enrollment*” — a fancy way of saying you can be in a high school program (getting your diploma or high school equivalency certificate) at the same time you are taking college credits.

HOW DO I DECIDE IF COMMUNITY COLLEGE IS RIGHT FOR ME?

If you hope to pursue a career that requires an Associate's degree, or if you are seeking to try out higher education in a more affordable and flexible environment with the possibility of future transfer, community college may be right for you.

COST OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE:

California Community Colleges charge you per credit-unit. As of 2017, it costs \$46 per credit-unit for California residents at any community college across the state. Full-time enrollment is 12 credit-units in a term (that is \$552 for 12 credits). Financial Aid (like the California College Promise Grant) is available for students with financial need. Read more about paying for college on [page 49](#).

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO COMPLETE COMMUNITY COLLEGE?

In community college, you can get your Associate Degree in a minimum of 2 years, but realistically, it takes most people 3 years (or more) in California.

HOW TO FIND A CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE:

Find your local California community college here: <http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Findacollege>.

Please note that if you are on parole/probation/supervision, you may have to reside in a different area than where you are from or would prefer to go to school. This may not be the ideal choice, so it is important to have a support system that can help you navigate the challenge of being in a less than ideal place after prison or jail.

To learn about **applying to college**, see [page 44](#), and contact the college you are interested in attending for more information. We also encourage you to talk to a trusted advisor (see [Appendix A for ideas](#).)

There is a list of community colleges that offer programs in prisons and jails online at: www.correctionstocollegeca.org



HELPFUL HINT:

Going From CA Community College to a “CSU” Or “UC”:

In California, CSUs are required to hold a certain number of spots for students who are transferring from California Community Colleges. Talk with a counselor at your community college to enroll in the “Associate Degree for Transfer” (ADT) program (learn more below). Also, while completing ADT does not guarantee admission to a UC, some campuses consider it in the comprehensive review process.

To learn more about the “Associate for Transfer” guarantee to a CSU, visit the following website:

<http://adgreewithaguarantee.com/>

To learn more about transferring from a California Community College into the UC system, visit the following website:

- “Associate for Transfer” program:

<http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/transfer/guarantee/index.html>

- Transfer Pathways program:

<http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/q-and-a/transfer-pathways/index.html>

four-year colleges and universities

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● *Earn your Bachelor's Degree*

WHO IS A FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY FOR?

These colleges and universities include both public and private schools where you can earn your Bachelor's Degree (Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Sciences degree). You can transfer from a community college (see page 42), or, if eligible, apply directly to a four-year college or university.

HOW DO I DECIDE IF A FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY IS RIGHT FOR ME?

If you wish to develop academic skills while you study a particular field in depth, hope to pursue a career that requires a college degree, or plan to pursue graduate or professional school, a four-year college or university may be right for you.

COST OF A FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY:

The cost of four-year colleges and universities varies a lot by school. Private colleges and universities are more expensive than public colleges and universities. Go to page 49 to learn more about financial aid and paying for college.

HOW TO FIND A FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY:

California has two public college systems: the California State University system (CSUs) and the University of California system (UCs).

- For a list of CSU campuses and services, see:
<https://www2.calstate.edu/attend/campuses/Pages/default.aspx>.
- For a list of UC campuses and services, see:
<http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/campuses/index.html>.

applying to college

WHAT DO I NEED TO APPLY TO COLLEGE?

Generally speaking, to apply for college, you need the following:

- Complete application including a compelling personal statement;
- Fee payment or fee waiver form;
- High School Credential: either your diploma or a California high school equivalency certificate (see [pages 30-32](#) to learn more);
- Transcripts for any college or high school coursework you have done, whether it was inside prison or jail or in the community (see [page 21](#) to learn more);
- Letters of Recommendation and Personal References (see [pages 22-23](#));
- Immunization/Vaccination Records (see [page 22](#)); and
- Social Security Number (see [pages 19-20](#)).
- For some schools, you need to take and submit College Admissions test scores (usually this means preparing for and taking the ACT or SAT test, and having your scores sent to colleges that you wish to attend). However, the ACT/SAT are not required to attend a California Community College or to transfer into a four-year college or university like a CSU or UC if you do so *from* a California community college.
 - If you are applying to a college or university that requires the ACT/SAT, we recommend reaching out to a counselor or educational advisor for guidance.

WILL COLLEGE APPLICATIONS ASK ABOUT MY CRIMINAL RECORD?

In California, the answer depends on whether you are applying to a public college/university or a private college/university.

- **California Public Colleges DO NOT ASK:** California Community Colleges, the California State University (CSU), and the University of California (UC) systems do not ask about an applicant's criminal history on their applications for admission.
- **California Private Colleges MIGHT ASK:** Many private colleges use the Common Application, which asks about criminal

convictions and school disciplinary records. Colleges that do not use the Common Application are still likely to ask about criminal history. One survey found that 66% of colleges nationwide collect criminal justice information, with the practice being more common at private colleges. Colleges may require special essays or documentation of rehabilitation from students with records. How different colleges consider this information in making admissions decisions varies from school to school.



HELPFUL HINT: Writing a compelling personal statement:

A positive story about your reentry from incarceration, and the hurdles you have had to overcome in your life due to poverty, injustice, inequality, or system involvement, demonstrate your **resilience** and **commitment** to your future goals. If you are comfortable sharing these stories in your college application, it can be a powerful

addition to an overall admissions profile. Many colleges and universities proactively seek to admit a diverse student body. It can really help to have a trusted advisor read over your application, including your personal statement, to give you feedback and help you craft strong application essays.

HOW TO TRANSFER CREDITS YOU ALREADY EARNED:

All college classes are measured in **credits**—a numerical value assigned to every class letting you know how many hours it counts towards graduation requirements. In other words, you

need a certain number of credits to graduate. If you have *attended multiple schools* OR if you are *looking to change schools*, you must include all prior transcripts with your application.



HELPFUL HINT: Transferring Credits

- Transferring credits is helpful when you don't want to repeat classes in a new school.
- Some schools have a limit of how many credits you can transfer. Sometimes you can ask for these credit-transfer limits to be increased. An admissions counselor or academic advisor at your school can provide more information on this topic.
- In general, **four-year colleges and universities** have *transfer agreements* with **California's community colleges**. California's community colleges have *different agreements* with **public** colleges and universities (CSUs and UCs) than with **private** colleges and universities.

HOW DO I FIND OUT WHICH CLASSES ARE TRANSFERRABLE TO CALIFORNIA'S PUBLIC FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (CSU AND UC SCHOOLS)?

- Call the school you want to attend for more information. Many schools have information online that explains which classes are transferrable.
- If you are looking for transferable classes specific to a major at a specific UC or CSU, you can use this online tool to match requirements by school: <http://www.assist.org/web-assist/welcome.html>.
- If you have questions about transferring credits, speak with your academic advisor at the school you intend to receive your degree from. They can advise you on what credits can transfer and how to transfer them.

graduate or professional school & advanced degrees

WHO IS GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL FOR?

After college, you may decide to dig deeper into a particular field of study, or be interested in working in a career that requires an advanced degree to practice. If you are nearing the end of college, or have already completed college, this section can help you consider options for graduate school or professional school.

HOW DO I DECIDE IF GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL IS RIGHT FOR ME?

If you wish to pursue a specific career that requires a professional degree (such as becoming a doctor, lawyer, or professor), or if you wish to develop a deep understanding of or generate new research in a particular area of study, a graduate or professional degree may be right for you.

Find support in the process -

Talk to other students who have been through this process and trusted advisors as you pursue your goals of graduate and professional school. Some graduate level professions require you to get a license or certificate after you complete years of educational requirements. There are barriers to getting many of these licenses and certificates (see pages 13-14). This information is not meant to discourage you from graduate school. Instead, it is important to do plenty of research about the effect of an arrest or conviction record before you choose a specific program for graduate or professional study!

Deciding to go to graduate school is a big decision. In addition to talking to a trusted mentor or advisor, here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Does the career you want require a graduate degree?
- Do you feel ready to commit to years of study to a particular career field or area of intense study?
- Do you have a plan for your finances (including financial aid) and family obligations while you attend graduate/professional school?

WHAT DO I NEED TO APPLY TO GRADUATE SCHOOL?

This *very much depends* on the specific program/degree to which you are applying (Master's program? PhD? Medical school? Law school?) as well as the school's particular requirements.

Generally speaking, applying to graduate school requires:

- Taking the appropriate standardized exam, for which many applicants choose to pay for test preparation classes to improve their scores;
- Submitting your transcripts from past colleges and schools you have attended;
- A personal statement about you, your background, and your motivation for pursuing this profession;
- A resume; and
- Multiple references and/or letters of recommendation.



HELPFUL HINT: Writing a compelling personal statement

To learn about the importance of writing a compelling personal statement, and how your experience with incarceration or experience as a member of a disenfranchised community can be leveraged to help you get into a great school, see page 44.

*Preparing these materials is time consuming.
For example:*

- Studying for standardized exams usually takes 2+ months.
- You should ask your references (these are often past employers, professors or instructors, and/or mentors) if they would be willing to

write you a letter of recommendation at least a month before you need to submit them.

Important! Be sure you research when standardized exams are administered, learn test and school application deadlines, and collect materials well in advance of applying.

COSTS OF GRADUATE SCHOOL:

Graduate school can be expensive, but there are many options to finance your education. For information on public financial assistance and loans, see pages 50-54. There are also private funding options that your school or work may offer.

- Some workplaces offer to subsidize your education in return for you coming back to work for their company, or offer to hold your job for you when you return from graduate school.
- Certain graduate programs come with funding. For example, some PhD programs will pay you a stipend while you complete your program.
- When receiving acceptances from different graduate programs, they may offer you school based financial aid. Sometimes, by responding to your school and asking for additional funding, or showing that you received more funding from another school, you can obtain more aid.

- Research each school you're interested in and learn about potential private scholarships to apply for.
- Talk to students who have financed their education through scholarships. They can provide unique insight about being a competitive candidate and where to look for opportunities.
- Check and see if there are national scholarships that can cover your study. Programs like McNair, Marshall, and Gates are not school specific, and can be applied to graduate studies.
- Look into identity based scholarships. For example, if you identify as LGBTQ+, the Point Foundation has scholarships available.

For more information, talk to your undergraduate institution's scholarship and fellowship department.

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL are both exciting endeavors that can change the course of your future in dramatic ways by opening up the possibility of high-paying, meaningful careers. At the same time, they may present many more barriers for students with records and low-income students, so it is critical to do your research before you apply, talk to current students and people practicing in that field, and get help from trusted advisors and lawyers if needed.

Quick Summary of Admissions Tests Required to Apply for Graduate School:

To apply to graduate school, you will likely need to first take a special graduate admissions test. Some of the most common admissions tests are:

GRE—For Master’s and PhD programs:

The GRE exam is a broad assessment of your critical thinking, analytical writing, verbal reasoning, and quantitative reasoning skills — all skills developed over the course of many years. Some schools may also require you to take one or more GRE Subject Tests.

GMAT—For Business School:

The GMAT assesses analytical writing and problem-solving abilities, while also addressing data sufficiency, logic, and critical reasoning skills that it believes to be vital to real-world business and management success.

MCAT—For Medical School:

The MCAT is an exam for prospective medical students in the United States, Australia, Canada, and Caribbean Islands. It is designed to assess problem solving, critical thinking, written analysis and knowledge of scientific concepts and principles.

LSAT—For Law School:

The LSAT is the exam for prospective law school candidates, designed to assess reading comprehension, logical, and verbal reasoning proficiencies.



iii.

PAYING FOR COLLEGE & FINDING STABILITY IN SCHOOL



SUMMARY - SECTION 3

Finding financial support and resources for pursuing a college education can be a challenging process, especially for students with records.

This Section provides the following information on paying for college and maintaining stability in school:

- **Financial Aid to Pay For School:** how and where to apply, potential legal barriers, and scholarship opportunities. ([page 50](#))
- **Paying for Other Basic Needs:** There are some resources to help you with housing, transportation, childcare, textbooks, and more—important practical needs. Learn about state programs like EOPS and discounted bus pass programs. ([page 55](#))
- **Addressing Legal Issues:** Unfortunately, legal issues like new criminal or civil cases, questions about your rights with a criminal record, parole or probation issues, and registration requirements can continue to come up while you are in school. Learn about resources so you are better prepared to deal with these difficult situations. ([page 57](#))

You may be surprised to learn that there are many resources available to support you!

financial aid to pay for school

People usually pay for school through a combination of resources: financial support from **family** members; wages from full-time or part-time **work**; and **financial aid**. In this section, we focus on different forms of financial aid.

Financial aid is the term used for any type of funding intended to help students pay for school. Financial aid includes grants and fee waivers, student loans, work-study, and scholarships.

- **Grants and Fee Waivers:** You *do not* have to pay grants or fee waivers back.
- **Student Loans:** You *do* have to pay back student loans.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID:

- Applying for federal and state financial aid is **free**. Groups that serve formerly incarcerated students like Project Rebound (contact information in [Appendix A](#), on page 65) can also help you with the process.
- Financial aid is available to students on parole and probation.
- Be aware that not all types of educational programs are eligible for all types of financial aid. Be sure to check with a financial aid counselor or expert at the school you hope to apply to to see which of these financial aid opportunities may be available to you.
- The amount of financial aid you can get is based mostly on *financial need*. Poor history with creditors will not automatically disqualify you.
- All that being said, there are a couple of legal reasons that you may be unable to get *federal financial aid*—more information below under the “FEDERAL AID” section.

1 Federal Financial Aid

Apply for *federal* financial aid through the “FAFSA”:

Filling out the “FAFSA” (*Free Application for Federal Student Aid*) will open the door to other forms of federal financial aid, which include those listed in the bullet points below. Apply at <https://fafsa.ed.gov>.

California also uses information from the FAFSA application to decide eligibility for state financial aid (unless you are undocumented, in which case you should instead fill out the California Dream Act Application—read more on page 53).



You are not a failure. Don't sell yourself short. When I started school, I had two kids, no idea how to pay for school, and a record. Now, I have six kids, a graduate degree, and figured out how to pay for school with financial aid: mostly grants that I do not have to pay back and loans that I am paying back. I have written a book, “Transforming Society’s Failure.” **I am not the exception. You can do it too! Use education to live up to your greatest potential.**

– OMARI AMILI, R.I.S.E. NAVIGATOR,
SOUTH SEATTLE COLLEGE

The following are types of federal funding available to students who apply for FAFSA:

- **Federal Pell Grants:** You do not have to pay a Pell Grant back unless you withdraw from school or get too low of a GPA. Pell Grants are given based on financial need and range from **approximately \$800 - \$6,000**.
- **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG):** If you have gotten a Pell Grant before, you may be able to get a FSEOG through your school which adds to a Pell Grant—this is additional federal grant money that you do not have to pay back. Only some colleges offer FSEOG.
- **Federal Stafford and Perkins Loans:** Any time you receive a “loan” for financial aid, you have to pay it back over time. Learn more about federal loans at <http://www.finaid.org/loans/studentloan.phtml>. Talk to a trusted school counselor before agreeing to take out loans—this is a big decision that should be taken with care and good financial planning.
- **Federal Work-study:** Work-study allows undergraduate and graduate students to have part-time jobs (on or off campus) that allow you to earn money to help pay education expenses. Work-study encourages community service and can provide job experience related to your areas of study in school.

BASIC FAFSA ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

You must:

- Show financial need (for most programs);
- Be a U.S. citizen or an eligible noncitizen;
- Have a valid Social Security number (see page 19);
- Be registered with Selective Service (see page 23);
- Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a regular student in an eligible degree or certificate program;
- Be enrolled at least half-time to be eligible for Direct Loan Program funds;
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress in college or career school (this means maintaining a minimum GPA and number of credits. Check on your school’s website or call your school for more information about their academic rules for getting financial aid);
- Sign a statement that (1) you are not in default on a federal student loan and (2) do not owe money on a federal student grant and (3) you will use federal student aid only for educational purposes; and
- Show you’re qualified to obtain a college or career school education by: (1) having a high school diploma or a recognized equivalent (see pages 30-33); (2) completing a high school education in a homeschool setting approved under state law; OR (3) enrolling in an eligible career pathway program and meeting one of the **"ability-to-benefit" alternatives** (talk to your school’s financial aid office for more information).
- Learn more about these and other requirements online at: studentaid.ed.gov/sa/eligibility/

LEGAL BARRIERS TO GETTING FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID THROUGH FAFSA:

Here are a few legal restrictions to be aware of in applying for federal financial aid:

- **Drug Convictions While Receiving Federal Financial Aid:** If you are convicted for a drug offense while receiving financial aid and choose to reapply for FAFSA afterwards, you will be required to disclose your previous drug conviction. When you do so, you will receive a worksheet to determine how and

whether your conviction affects your federal financial aid eligibility. **Note, this is not an automatic bar to financial aid!** Instead, if your loan eligibility is suspended, you can complete an approved drug rehabilitation program or successfully pass two unannounced drug tests to restore your ability to get a federal loan. For more information, see: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/eligibility/criminal-convictions#drug-convictions>

- **Sex Offenses that Led to Involuntary *Civil Commitment*:** If you were required to be *involuntarily civilly committed* after a period of incarceration for a sex offense, you cannot get a federal Pell Grant. However, you can still *get other* types of federal and state financial aid.
- **Incarcerated Students:** If you are currently incarcerated in an adult institution, ask your facility about financial aid.
 - *Federal Financial Aid:* Since the new federal “Second Chance Pell Pilot Program” launched in 2015 under President Obama, a few prisons are now able to offer Pell Grants for incarcerated students to pursue college. In California, this is available at CSP-LA, CIW, Sierra Conservation Camp (SCC), and RJD Correctional Facility. Even if federal aid isn’t offered at your prison, you could still apply for it so it is ready when you get out.
 - *State Financial Aid:* You may still be able to get some forms of state aid while incarcerated (like the California College Promise Grant if you do “distance learning” or a “correspondence course” with one of California’s community colleges). Read more about state financial aid on page 53.
- **Registering for the Selective Service (this applies to males only):** You can only get federal financial aid if you registered for the Selective Service before your 26th birthday, or fall into one of the exceptions. To read more about the exceptions for incarceration, see pages 23-24. If you are a transgender person and are not sure if you had to register, you can read more on the Selective Service’s website at <https://www.sss.gov/Registration-Info/Who-Registration>.



HELPFUL HINT: Filling Out the FAFSA for State Aid:

Even if you do not qualify for federal financial aid, you may still need to complete the FAFSA because most schools and states use FAFSA information to award nonfederal aid, and you might be able to get some of those funds. If you are undocumented, however, you should not fill out the FAFSA and instead fill out the California Dream Act state financial aid application (more information on next page).

If you think one of these barriers might affect your ability to get federal financial aid, you can call Root & Rebound’s reentry legal hotline any Friday, 9 am - 5 pm PST, at phone number 510-279-4662, for more information about your legal rights.

2 State Financial Aid (California)

California public colleges and universities offer a great amount of financial support and other services for low-income and non-traditional students.

Applying for State Financial Aid through the FAFSA or California Dream Act:

California also uses the FAFSA to determine your eligibility for state aid (unless you are undocumented, in which case you can still apply for **state financial aid** through the **California Dream Act**).

- **Cal Grant:** A Cal Grant is money for college you don't have to pay back. To qualify, you must apply for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA) by the deadline and meet certain requirements. Cal Grants are given by the California Student Aid Commission based on your financial need, GPA, and educational goals. They are the largest source of California state-funded student financial aid. For more information and to apply, visit the Cal Grant websites at <http://www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=905> and www.csac.ca.gov/.

- **California College Promise Grant:** For eligible low-income students, this program waives the \$46-per-credit-unit enrollment fee that all California community colleges charge. For more information and to apply, visit the CCPG website at: <https://home.cccapply.org/money/california-college-promise-grant>
 - **Chafee Grant:** This is a special financial aid grant for people who are or were in foster care. For more information on this grant, visit the California Student Aid Commission website at: <https://www.chafee.csac.ca.gov/default.aspx>.
 - **California Dream Act:** This allows eligible undocumented and nonresident documented students to apply for and receive private scholarships funded through public universities, state-administered financial aid, university grants, community college fee waivers, and Cal Grants. For more information, visit the California Student Aid Commission website at: http://www.csac.ca.gov/dream_act.asp
- Learn more about all of these sources of financial aid on the California Community Colleges website at: <https://home.cccapply.org/money>



HELPFUL HINT: Get help with filling out the FAFSA forms:

- Many of the campus groups designed to support formerly incarcerated students in applying for and successfully completing college will help you fill out the FAFSA application. For a list of these groups, see www.correctionstocollegeca.org.
- Most school's financial aid offices also have counselors who may be able to help you. Call the college to which you are applying for more information.

3 School-Based Financial Aid

Many schools offer their own scholarships, grants, and work-study opportunities separate from federal and state financial aid. Contact the school's financial aid office to learn more about any additional funding opportunities.

4 Other Scholarships and Fellowships

In addition to school-based scholarships and aid, there are many other outside scholarship programs, especially for first-generation students, students of color, and students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

As a start, the following websites offer information about scholarships and fellowships:

U.S. Department of Education "Finding Scholarships": <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships/finding-scholarships> (Be sure to read about Avoiding Scams too!)

U.S. Department of Labor's "Career OneStop" scholarship search tool online at: <http://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/training/find-scholarships.aspx> (You can narrow by things like degree type and state you are in.)

College Board: www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org and <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>.

CollegeNet: www.collegenet.com

CollegeToolkit: www.collegetoolkit.com

Fastweb: www.fastweb.com

Go College: www.gocollege.com

Scholarships.com: www.scholarships.com

Additional information about affording college at: www.icanaffordcollege.com.

Ask a trusted advisor for help researching various financial aid and scholarship opportunities!

paying for other basic needs

Housing, Transportation, Childcare, Textbooks, Etc. ● ● ●

IN DEVELOPING THIS TOOLKIT, one of the challenges many formerly incarcerated students brought up was finding enough money to pay for basic needs like textbooks, housing, transportation, and childcare while going back to school. Federal and state financial aid (discussed on pages 50-53) often covered tuition, but only sometimes covered these other financial needs.

If you are having trouble managing finances and paying for all your basic needs in school, talk to a trusted advisor (see some ideas in [Appendix A](#), pages 65-66).

FINDING SUPPORT AND MONEY FOR BASIC NEEDS:

Below we highlight some key programs you can contact to see if you can get additional financial assistance and other forms of academic support. Some of these programs and resources will help cover textbooks, transportation, and other basic needs.

EOPS (offered at California Community Colleges): Extended Opportunities Programs and Services (EOPS) provide additional academic and financial support to California public students who face economic, social, language, and educational disadvantages. EOPS services can include: early registration, grants and book assistance, one-on-one academic counseling three times per academic quarter, and transfer assistance. There is a limited amount of EOPS funds, so not all eligible students will be accepted. Apply early! To learn more about EOPS and related programs, visit <http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/StudentServices/EOPSCARE.aspx>.

DOR: The California Department of Rehabilitation offers some resources for individuals with disabilities seeking Vocational Rehabilitation Services. This Department may help you secure a job to help support your education. In order to determine your eligibility for these services, visit: <https://www.dor.ca.gov/VRED/Am-I-Eligible-4-VR-Services.html>

EOP (offered at California's CSU and UC systems): The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) is similar to EOPS, offering low-income and disadvantaged students financial assistance, mentorship, and academic support. EOP is offered at four UC campuses (UC-Berkeley, UC-Davis, UC-Santa Barbara, and UC-Santa Cruz). Again, there are limited funds, so apply early! To learn more and to apply, visit: <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/campuses/specific-populations/educational-opportunity-program/index.html>.

PUENTE Project: PUENTE helps disadvantaged students at community colleges (and some high schools) prepare for transfer to a four-year college, including some financial assistance and intensive academic counseling. To learn more, visit: <http://extranet.cccco.edu/Divisions/AcademicAffairs/CurriculumandInstructionUnit/PuenteProject.aspx>. You can visit UC-Berkeley's PUENTE website at <http://puente.berkeley.edu/>.

PAYING FOR TRANSPORTATION:

Many community and four-year colleges offer discounted bus passes for the semester. Some programs may even cover the entire cost. To determine whether this is the case, talk with support programs at your school. Generally, you can pay the fee for your bus pass, and pick it up, at the Cashier's Office. You can also ask your support program for directions on how to obtain your bus pass.

FINDING AND PAYING FOR HOUSING:

Below are some general tips for finding housing while in school:

- Call 211 to ask about housing support agencies in your local area.
- Call Root & Rebound's reentry legal hotline at 510-279-4662 to look up housing agencies in your local area.
- Talk to current students (especially students who participate in campus programs designed specifically for students with records) about how they found and paid for housing.
- Ask the school's admissions and financial aid offices about any financial support or grants for housing. You may be able to live in campus housing at a discounted rate.
- Live with other students who you trust, family or friends, who can help you afford rent and share other costs of living.
- Look into financial aid programs that allow you to get work-study, earning some money at a campus-approved job while you are at school.
- If you are able to balance school and work, consider part-time work that can help you pay for housing expenses.
- Remember—talking to a trusted advisor can help you figure out a plan that works for you. Housing is very challenging, especially in urban areas where the cost of living is high, so ask for advice and resources from people who support you!

A Note about Transitional or Subsidized Housing: If you are living in transitional housing or subsidized housing (like public housing or Section 8), this can help you afford your housing as you go back to school.

At the same time, there can be real issues with getting or keeping subsidized housing. For example, subsidized housing has long wait-lists, has some restrictions on people with criminal records, and in some rare circumstances, will treat your financial aid as income that disqualifies you from the housing program.

FINDING AND PAYING FOR CHILDCARE:

Campus childcare centers provide care for children of students in many California community colleges and four-year public colleges and universities. Childcare may be provided all day or may be adjusted to a parent's class schedule. These centers may also serve as training sites for students in college child development classes. Programs are funded by a combination of parent fees, student body fees, and state funds.

Child Care on Campus: If you are a parent pursuing college, finding a college with daycare on the campus can be a big help. You can drop your son or daughter off at childcare while you attend class or study.

Many California community colleges and four-year colleges and universities have "Child Development Centers" that provide childcare all day or may adjust to a parent's class schedule for children under 2 years old. Sometimes these campus childcare centers are also training locations for students taking college-level child development classes. These campus childcare programs are funded by a combination of parent fees, student body fees, and state funds.

The following website lists 135 California colleges with childcare on campus: <http://www.collegesimply.com/colleges/california/colleges-with-daycare/>. You can explore this list for the colleges you are looking into, and call the childcare centers for more information about cost and any financial support for low-income parents. Be sure to call the school to verify that it has a childcare center on campus and to ask how enrollment and pricing works.



GET HELP: If you have a question about your criminal record and how it affects your right to live in transitional or subsidized housing, you may wish to talk to a housing lawyer at a legal aid office (see a list in [Appendix E](#), pages 71-73). You can also call Root & Rebound's reentry legal hotline any Friday, 9 am - 5 pm PST, at 510-279-4662.

dealing with legal issues that come up

MANY SYSTEM IMPACTED STUDENTS are still dealing with issues related to old and ongoing court cases, court debt (like restitution, fines and fees), issues related to reunifying with children and other family members, parole or probation issues, and legal troubles with landlords and employers, among other things. If you are experiencing legal troubles, you are not alone.

Below are some general tips and resources if you have legal questions that come up as you go back to school. This is general information, not legal advice, shared to help you work toward overcoming legal issues so you can successfully complete your education.

1 New or Ongoing Legal Cases

Sometimes new legal issues (or ongoing ones from the past) can create a barrier or even a crisis while you are going to school. These legal issues can threaten to take you off track—to the best of your ability, don't let them! Talking to a lawyer in times of uncertainty can help you weigh your options. Below we give other tips for finding lawyers to speak with if you have a legal concern or question.

There are two main types of cases: criminal cases and civil cases. The type of legal issue will affect who you reach out to for help.

1. **CRIMINAL CASES:** If you have an issue related to a new or old criminal case, talk to your public defender/defense lawyer right away to find out your options. If you discover there is an old warrant for your arrest, you can also call the Public Defender's office for advice.

Please Note: If you have an issue regarding your parole or probation, like problems following your conditions or working with your parole/probation officer, you can also call Root & Rebound's reentry legal hotline any Friday at 510-279-4662.

2. **CIVIL CASES:** If you have ANY other legal issue (anything other than an arrest or criminal court matter), this is called a "**civil**" legal issue. There are many **legal aid organizations** across the state of California that provide free legal help to low-income people. We have listed many of these organizations by region in [Appendix E](#).

Please Note: In addition to reaching out to local legal aid organizations, you can also call Root & Rebound's reentry legal hotline any Friday at 510-279-4662.

If your legal issue is related to **family law or your custody or visitation with your children**, Call Root & Rebound's reentry legal hotline if you have a record and do not have a lawyer helping you with the court process.

2 Tips for Students on Community Supervision (Parole or Probation)

If you are on community supervision (like parole or probation), it can make or break your ability to be successful in school. On the next page, we did our best to provide practical tips for succeeding on supervision while you are a student.

TIPS:

- Make sure you have a printed copy of all of your parole or probation conditions. Read over those conditions, and discuss any questions you have with your parole or probation officer.
- If you are concerned that a condition of parole or probation is violating your rights, talk to a lawyer. You can speak with your public defender/defense attorney and/or call Root & Rebound's reentry legal hotline any Friday, 9 am - 5 pm PST, at 510-279-4662.
- If you have a disability, you have the legal right under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and California's state disability laws to receive **accommodations**. Accommodations on parole or probation might include:
 - Any help necessary for you to understand the information being communicated to you by a parole or probation officer (for example, a sign language interpreter for a hearing-impaired person; reading aloud of written materials for a vision-impaired person; or simplifying information for a developmentally disabled person).
 - Reasonable changes to procedures so that you can receive services in a location that is accessible to you (for example, meeting at your home if you cannot get to another location; ensuring that you can get to a program you are required to attend like a drug treatment center, a job center, or a literacy center).
 - The ability to keep any device you had in prison for your disability, such as a wheelchair, cane, prosthesis, eyeglasses, or prosthetic eye(s).
 - Consideration for your disability if parole/probation needs to transport you somewhere.
 - Consideration of any disabilities if a parole or probation officer arrests or physically restrains you.
- If your parole office is requiring you to meet at times that conflict with your work or school schedule, consider scheduling an in-person meeting with your officer (and possibly the officer's supervisor) to discuss how to limit or eliminate these scheduling conflicts so you can successfully complete school and work. **Remember—school and employment are critical to staying out of prison, so these are important talking points in these discussions.**
- Even though it can be challenging at times, **it is extremely important to stay calm when you communicate with your parole or probation officer.** Having a bad relationship with an officer will only add stress to going back to school, which is stressful in and of itself. If you are having a problem with your officer, again, consider having a calm discussion about it or meeting with the officer's supervisor. You might also be able to change certain conditions that are not required by law, if that is what is causing the problem. *Contact a lawyer (like the local public defender's office or Root & Rebound's reentry legal hotline any Friday, 9 am - 5 pm PST, at phone number 510-279-4662) for support and guidance.*

REMEMBER THAT EVEN THOUGH you are on supervision, you still have rights. Plus, most parole and probation officers should understand that school is critical to your success in reentry. Still, issues come up often, and emotions can get heated. Try to stay calm and get advice from someone you can trust (including a lawyer if needed) if you run into problems related to parole or probation.



On any given day, approximately

400,000

Californians are living under supervision by probation or parole;

96%

of them live in a zip code that is within

15 miles

of a public college campus.

3 Questions about 290 Registration

In California, many people are required to register under California Penal Code Section 290 for a huge range of past convictions for sex and indecency offenses. The registration requirement may affect your experience at school, so it is important to know what rights you have and what legal obligations the state and school expect you to uphold so that you may pursue your education with as few obstacles as possible.

Below are very important things to know if you are a 290 registrant.

REGISTRATION WITH LOCAL POLICE AND CAMPUS POLICE:

In California, if you are attending a college or university full-time or part-time, or employed or living at a college or university, for more than 14 days in a row (or more than 30 total days in a year), you must register with the campus police *in addition* to the sheriff's office. **You must do this within five days of enrolling in classes.**

FINANCIAL AID BARRIERS FOR 290 REGISTRANTS:

Pell Grants may be unavailable to you if you were involuntarily committed after a period of incarceration for a sex offense. However, many other types of financial aid may still be available to you. See page 50 for more information on applying for financial aid.

DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT BASED ON REGISTRATION STATUS:

Unfortunately, faculty members or other students may learn about your registration status through the Megan's Law website or other sources, and may discriminate against you based on this information. Because this information is considered public information, there's no law preventing faculty members or other students from disclosing it. Certain campus police departments may even be authorized to disclose information about your registration status campus-wide.

If your registration status is shared against your will or if you are being harassed because of your registration status, you may wish to contact:

- **Your campus police, depending on your relationship with them.** If you feel that the campus police at your school would advocate for you and treat you fairly, you can reach out to them regarding issues like spreading personal information or harassment;
- **Root & Rebound's reentry legal hotline** any Friday, 9 am - 5 pm PST, at phone number 510-279-4662, to speak confidentially with a reentry lawyer; OR
- **All for Constitutional Sex Offense Laws (ACSOL)**, a non-profit which provides legal assistance and support for people on the 290 registry and their loved ones. ACSOL may be able to provide legal information, referrals for support, or ideas for next steps. Their contact information is:

All for Constitutional Sex Offense Laws
ACLU Building
1313 W. 8th Street
Los Angeles, CA 90017
Phone Number: (818) 305-5984

iv.

**ENTERING THE
WORKFORCE:
Know Your Rights as
You Apply to Jobs!**



entering the workforce

AS YOU (RE)ENTER THE WORKFORCE, it is important to know both potential barriers to getting certain jobs (discussed on pages 12-14) and to **know your rights!**

Below are some key legal protections to know about when it comes to California employers running a background check on you. (Some counties like Los Angeles and San Francisco also have additional protections to the ones listed below.)

The Fair Chance Act expands statewide in California:

Beginning January 1, 2018, under **California's new Fair Chance Act**, California employers with 5 or more employees *cannot* ask about your conviction history until *after they give you a conditional offer of employment*.

This new law provides you with certain rights if an employer runs a background check on you:

1. An employer cannot ask you about your conviction history at any time before you receive a conditional offer of employment, including on the paper application.
2. Once you have received a conditional offer of employment, the employer **may** ask about your conviction history and/or run a background check on you with your written permission.
3. An employer can consider convictions that have not been sealed or dismissed from the past 7 years, but cannot consider the following:
 - a. Arrests not leading to convictions, unless charges are pending;
 - b. Arrests, convictions, or juvenile adjudications that have been sealed;
 - c. Dismissed convictions;
 - d. Negative information, including convictions, over 7 years old;
 - e. Diversion programs.
4. An employer must consider whether your conviction history has a "direct and adverse" relationship with the duties of the job.
5. If an employer decides to take back your conditional offer because of your conviction record, the employer must provide you with a written notice that includes the following:
 - a. The conviction(s) the employer relied upon;
 - b. A copy of the conviction history that the employer relied upon; and
 - c. Information about your right to respond to, correct, or challenge (with evidence of rehabilitation or mitigation) the information the employer relied upon.
6. You will be given 5 days to respond to, correct, or challenge the evidence the employer provides. If you require more time to gather evidence to challenge a conviction that you believe is not accurate, you are entitled to 5 additional days.
7. If you believe an employer has violated the law, you can file a complaint with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing.
8. Your county or municipality's rules may provide additional protections for job applicants with records.

If you have questions about the Act or your rights, call Root & Rebound's reentry legal hotline on Fridays from 9am - 5pm.

conclusion

AS A STUDENT WHO HAS BEEN IMPACTED by the criminal justice system, you have likely built resilience by overcoming tough experiences. You might also face some unique barriers to certain educational programs and careers because of your record, so it is important to prepare and be ready for them! Above all, we hope this Toolkit serves as a reminder that you have people who believe in you and want to see you succeed.

Two of the main contributors to this Toolkit—Danny (his letter to readers on page 36) and Alejandra (her letter to readers on page 6)—shared their own stories so that you too can envision a path from incarceration to education, and the freedom of a better life that an education can provide.

We hope this Toolkit has inspired you and prepared you for what's next in your educational and career goals. Whatever obstacles you may face, remember that Root & Rebound is always available to you as a resource!



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APPENDIX A

IDEAS ON WHERE TO GO FOR SUPPORT

ONE OF THE COMMON CONCERNS that formerly incarcerated students raised in the creation of this Toolkit was the importance of finding social support on campus—people and groups who can relate to you and who you can trust for advice.

Below are groups and people that can support you on your educational journey.

Five Keys: Free school that offers educational assessments, adult basic education (ABE), and GED/High School Equivalency test preparation. Find out where they are located and contact information on [page 17](#).

Campus Groups for Formerly Incarcerated Students: Many community colleges and an increasing number of four-year colleges and universities in California have formed groups specifically for system-impacted and formerly incarcerated students on campus. For a complete list of these programs, visit the website: www.correctionstocollegeca.org.

EOPS, EOP, and Puente: Offered on some California public college campuses, these programs provide students from disadvantaged backgrounds additional resources, mentorship, academic counseling, and sometimes financial assistance. While not everyone who applies can join these programs, their staff will likely have a lot of helpful information and advice for system-impacted and formerly incarcerated students.

College campus groups for first-generation students: If you are the first person in your family to attend college or graduate school, seek out any groups for first-generation students.

The **Way-Pass program** serves formerly incarcerated women attending City College of San Francisco. It serves as a bridge for women transitioning from incarceration to education and strives to increase retention and educational completion rates among formerly incarcerated women at CCSF. For more information please call 415-452-4889 or email waypass@gmail.com.

Project Rebound: Project Rebound is a special admissions program that helps formerly incarcerated individuals enter the California State University system. It is currently available at [SFSU](#), [San Bernardino](#), [Bakersfield](#), [Fullerton](#), [Pomona](#), [Sacramento](#), [Fresno](#), and [San Diego](#). The program offers special admissions for men and women who might not normally qualify for university acceptance because of application deadlines and minor academic deficiencies. This program is supported by the Associated Students and many other departments in the California state system.

PROJECT REBOUND CONTACTS

SFSU: (415) 405-0954

San Bernardino:

Annika Anderson
Office: FOB-242
5500 University Pkwy
San Bernardino, CA 92407
(909) 537-4351

Bakersfield:

Michael D. Dotson
9001 Stockdale Hwy.
Bakersfield, CA 93311-1022
(916) 278-6794

Fullerton:

Romarilyn Ralston
800 N. State College Boulevard
Fullerton, CA 92831
(657) 278-7859

Pomona:

Renford Reese
3801 W Temple Ave.
Pomona, CA 91768
(909) 869-4665

Sacramento:

Alton Williams
Mail Stop 6085 6000 “J” street
Alpine Hall Rm. #114
Sacramento, CA 95819
(916) 278-6794

Fresno:

Jennifer Leahy
2576 E. San Ramon Ave
M/S ST 104
Fresno, CA 93740
(559) 278-2313

San Diego:

Alan Mobley
5500 Campanile Drive
San Diego, CA 92182-4505
(619) 594-2596

APPENDIX B

RESOURCES FOR CHOOSING A CAREER PATH

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT CONSIDERATIONS that go into deciding if a profession or career is right for you. The nonprofit Five Keys offers free assessments that look at your skills, interests, and personality to determine what jobs may be the best fit. These three areas can guide your career search as you determine which path to pursue. (Find more information about Five Keys on [page 17](#).)

When exploring your job or career options, consider these resources:

- **Your correctional facility’s library or your local public library:**
Look for career planning guides and vocational handbooks.
- **California Career Planning Guide:**
A career guide published by the California Career Resource Network (CalCRN). You can request the guide in writing from: CalCRN—Order Processing, 1430 N. Street, Suite 4503, Sacramento, CA 95814, or by calling (916) 323-6544. If you have Internet access, the guide is available to read or download for free online at: <http://www.californiacareers.info/ccPG.aspx>.
- **America’s Job Centers of California** offer “interest inventory” tools that can help you explore what kinds of jobs might be right for you.
- **CareerOneStop website:**
Go to <https://www.careeronestop.org>. Under the “Explore Careers” menu option, you can take a self-assessment to learn more about your interests and jobs that might be a good fit.
- **California Career Resource Network website:**
Go to <http://www.californiacareers.info/index.aspx>. The site provides links to several California-focused career-planning resources.
- **Occupational Outlook Handbook:**
Go to <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>, and browse different careers to learn more.
- **Talk to people in your field of interest** by requesting an *informational interview*, or looking online for *professional associations* in those fields.
- **California Employment & Development Department (EDD) website:**
The EDD has an interactive online job guide with information on hundreds of jobs, available at: <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/OccGuides/>.

APPENDIX C CHART: A Summary of Record-Cleaning Options in California

THE FOLLOWING CHART SUMMARIZES ways to clean up your criminal record in more detail. For more information about cleaning up your record, please contact Root & Rebound's reentry legal hotline any Friday, from 9 am - 5 pm PST, at phone number 510-279-4662.

HELPFUL HINT: Be prepared to show support for your clean record! For many (not all) of these record-cleaning options, you have to convince a judge (or sometimes the Governor or President) that you deserve the remedy requested. When you ask to have your record cleaned up (usually by filing papers in court or with the government), include *all possible materials that support your request*, such as letters of support, school transcripts, diplomas, awards, certificates of achievement, etc.

DIFFERENT LEGAL AVENUES FOR CLEANING UP YOUR RECORD IN CALIFORNIA

POSSIBLE WAYS TO CLEAN UP YOUR RECORD IN CALIFORNIA	CAN I GET IT?	WHEN CAN I GET IT?	WHAT DOES IT DO?
Fix errors	YES! Anyone can fix errors in their record.	ANYTIME.	You can make sure your record is correct.
Dismissal/Expungement	<p><i>You may be eligible if:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You did NOT spend any time in prison for the offense; You are OFF probation, or other supervision; AND You are NOT currently charged with, serving a sentence for, or on probation/parole/ supervision for another offense. <p><i>Note: Certain convictions are NEVER eligible for expungement (technically called a "dismissal").</i></p> <p><i>Note: Payment of all fines, fees, and restitution may be a factor in whether a dismissal is granted.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You must be OFF probation or other supervision. Certain convictions require you to wait 1 or 2 years before you can apply for an expungement. <p><i>Note: If you are still on probation, you may be able to get released early, contact Root & Rebound's reentry legal hotline any Friday at 510-279-4772 for legal guidance.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most private employers, private landlords, insurance companies, creditors, and other people will NOT be able to see an expunged conviction if they run a background check on you. Most private employers CANNOT ask about or consider a conviction that has been expunged.
Reduce felony to a misdemeanor under Cal. Penal Code § 17(b)	<p><i>You may be eligible if:</i></p> <p>Your conviction was for a felony "wobbler", AND you were NOT sentenced to state prison; AND you were NOT sentenced to county jail under CA's Realignment laws; AND you were sentenced to PROBATION.</p>	You can apply anytime, but you will have a much better chance if you wait until you are halfway through or done with your probation term.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can say that you were never convicted of the felony. Restores your rights to vote and sit on a jury. May restore your gun rights. Removes many legal barriers to getting professional licenses and jobs.
Prop. 47: Reduce felony to a misdemeanor	You are eligible if your conviction is for one of the covered offenses AND you do NOT have a conviction for a "super strike" felony, and you are NOT required to register as a sex-offender. Consult a Clean Slate attorney for a full list of Prop-47 eligible offenses.	ASAP!—You MUST apply before November 2022.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces your current sentence or term of supervision. Offers immediate release if you have already served your reduced sentence. Changes your conviction to a misdemeanor. Removes legal barriers and restores most rights lost due to felony conviction.
Prop. 64: Reduce (possibly dismiss) some marijuana convictions	You are eligible if your conviction is for one of the covered offenses (call Root & Rebound at 510-279-4662 for the full list). Unlike Prop. 47, you are not automatically disqualified if you have a conviction for a "super strike" felony or are required to register as a sex-offender under Cal. Pen. Code section 290(c), but the trial court may impose higher punishment under those circumstances.	ANYTIME.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legalizes certain marijuana offenses related to personal use where the individual is 21 or older. Reduces the penalties for certain marijuana offenses to wobblers, misdemeanors, or infractions. Restores all civil rights denied due to a felony conviction where sentence is recalled. May be relieved of duty to register.

POSSIBLE WAYS TO CLEAN UP YOUR RECORD IN CALIFORNIA	CAN I GET IT?	WHEN CAN I GET IT?	WHAT DOES IT DO?
Certificate of Rehabilitation	<p><i>You may be eligible if:</i></p> <p>You were convicted of a felony and you served a state prison sentence for it OR you were convicted of a felony or misdemeanor sex offense, AND your conviction was expunged, AND have not been incarcerated since then, AND are not on formal probation; AND You have lived in California for the last 5 years.</p> <p><i>Note: You are NOT eligible if you have a conviction for certain serious sex offenses; were sentenced to the death penalty; have mandatory lifetime probation; are in the military; or no longer live in California.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You must be OFF probation, parole, or PRCS You must complete 7-10 year waiting (“rehabilitation”) period, based on conviction offense. <p><i>Note: You can request a COR before the end of your waiting period, but it must be “in the interests of justice” to grant it early.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serves as official proof of your rehabilitation. May remove sex offender registration requirement. Serves as automatic application for governor’s pardon.
CA Governor’s Pardon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You were convicted of a felony or misdemeanor sex offense; AND Your conviction is from California. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you get a COR, you are automatically applied for a pardon. If no COR, 10-year waiting period for direct application. May be recommended for pardon by BPH while incarcerated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May restore your gun rights. Restores your right to vote and sit on a jury. Removes sex offender registration requirement. Allows you to work as parole agent or probation officer. Restores your right to hold public office.
Sealing adult arrest records	<p><i>You may be eligible if:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You were arrested as adult; Your arrest did NOT lead to a conviction; You have NO other convictions connected to the arrest; AND You are found factually innocent of the charges. 	<p>You must apply within 2 years after you are arrested or charged.</p> <p><i>Note: You may apply later, but you must show good reason for not applying earlier.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All records related to arrest and criminal proceedings are sealed and destroyed. It’s as if the arrest and prosecution never occurred.
Sealing juvenile records	<p><i>You may be eligible if:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are over 18, OR it has been 5 years since your last arrest or probation discharge; No adult convictions for felony or misdemeanor of “moral turpitude”; Case started and ended in juvenile court; AND NO open civil lawsuit from juvenile offense. <p><i>Note: You are NOT eligible if juvenile adjudication was for certain violent offenses AND you were over 14 at time of offense.</i></p>	<p>As soon as you are over 18; OR</p> <p>5 years after your last arrest or discharge from probation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All court, law enforcement, and other records are sealed and destroyed. It’s as if the juvenile case never occurred.
Federal expungement or dismissal	<p><i>You may be eligible if:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You were convicted of “simple” possession of drugs under federal law; You were in possession of a drug covered by the statute; You were only convicted of one drug-related offense (state or federal); You successfully completed probation with NO violations. 	<p>As soon as you complete probation.</p>	<p>Under 21 at time of offense: ALL records of conviction, arrest, and criminal proceedings are destroyed as if it never happened.</p> <p>Over 21 at time of offense: All records of conviction, arrest, and criminal proceedings are sealed (but not destroyed).</p>
Presidential pardon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You were convicted of a federal offense; You have completed your sentence (including any parole or probation term). 	<p>5 years from the date of your release (or from the date of your conviction if you were never incarcerated).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restores any civil rights lost due to federal conviction, including gun rights; Does not restore rights lost due to state convictions.

APPENDIX D

NAVIGATING OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING BARRIERS

WHEN PLANNING WHICH PROFESSION to enter, you need to consider not only the educational requirements, but also any **state licensing, certification, or credential requirements**. For students with arrest and conviction histories, there are some unique barriers—and rights—you should understand.

Occupational licensing boards operate separately from school admissions, and have a separate set of laws and rules they apply. Even if you have a degree in the field you want to pursue, you may still need to

get a state license or certificate to actually perform that job in California.

Applying for state licensure generally requires submitting fingerprints, paying application fees, and proving that you meet certain educational, examination and/or work experience requirements. These requirements are set by the particular licensing board to which you are applying.

*For more information, you can call Root & Rebound at 510-279-4662 and request the **Occupational Licensing Toolkit**.*

9 months to 1 year before you want to see the change reflected on your record:

- Clean up your record (if possible) with a clean slate clinic or reentry lawyer.
- Consult a lawyer if you discovered barriers to the occupations you want to pursue.
- Find a mentor in that field to learn more about the barriers you may face with a criminal background.
- Research your licensing board to see if they have criteria they look for when issuing a license.
- Find out if you can apply for a pre-approval application to check your eligibility before you pay for the schooling and training required for that license.
- Gather mitigating and rehabilitative evidence, letters of support, police records, and your RAP sheet for your license application. Learn more about mitigating and rehabilitative evidence on [page 14](#).

Important Warning: When you apply for a professional license, the licensing board can see your *entire criminal record*—including convictions that have been “expunged.” (Note: Regular employers generally CANNOT see expunged convictions—but licensing boards are different.)

Here are some factors that will impact your ability to get a license:

- The Board’s treatment of criminal records
- The nature of the offense
- The time since the conviction
- Your ability to mitigate the impact of your record
- Your ability to compellingly show evidence of rehabilitation
- Avoiding any missteps or misrepresentations in presenting information about your criminal record

While choosing what educational path to pursue, it is important to look at which board governs the license you would need, and get legal advice about how your particular arrest or conviction history might impact your application for a state license or certification.

GET LEGAL HELP:

For information and assistance, call Root & Rebound’s reentry legal hotline any Friday, 9 am - 5 pm PST, at phone number (510) 279-4662, or write to us at 1730 Franklin St., Suite 300, Oakland, CA 94612.

APPENDIX E

LEGAL AID REFERRALS ACROSS CALIFORNIA

To find a legal aid organization near you, you can also try the following resources:

- Call **Root & Rebound's Reentry Legal Hotline** any Friday at 510-279-4662. (We accept calls from people in prison and jail.)
- Contact the **Local County Bar Association** or Ethnic Bar Association in your areas.
- Look at the **California State Bar legal aid listings**: <http://lawhelpca.org/find-legal-help>.
- Call **2-1-1**, or visit www.211database.org.
- **Self-Help Family Law Resource**: Every family court in the state of California has a Family Law/ Self-Help Facilitator, which is an office that can help you fill out family court forms, answer questions, provide general information about family law issues, and walk you through the steps of your case if you do not have a lawyer. To find your local Family Law Facilitator, go to <http://www.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp-facilitators.htm>.

Legal Aid Referrals by Region:

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

ACLU of Northern California

Location: San Francisco, CA
Phone:
English Legal Assistance:
(415) 621-2488;
Spanish Legal Assistance:
(415) 293-6356
Website: <https://www.aclunc.org/vote>

East Bay Community Law Center

Location: Berkeley, CA
Phone: (510) 548-4040
Website: <http://www.ebclc.org>

Ukiah, CA: (707) 462-1471,
Toll-Free: (877) 529-7700
Website: <http://www.about.lsncc.net>

Legal Services of Northern California

Locations and Phone:
Eureka: (707) 445-0866,
Toll-Free: (800) 972-0002

Public Defender's Office, Yolo County

Location: Woodland, CA
Phone: (530) 666-8165
Website: <http://www.yolocounty.org/law-justice/public-defender>

BAY AREA

Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus Immigrant Rights Program

Location: San Francisco, CA
Phone: (415) 896-1701
Website:
<http://www.advancingjustice-alc.org>

Marin County: (415) 354-6360
Napa County: (707) 320-6348
San Francisco: (415) 354-6360
San Mateo County: (650) 472-2666
Santa Clara County:
(408) 850-7066
Website: <http://www.baylegal.org>

Dolores Street Community Services

Location: San Francisco, CA
Phone: (415) 282-6209
Website: <http://www.dscs.org>

Bay Area Legal Aid –Federal Student Loan Consolidation and Disability Discharge Assistance

Locations & Phone:
Toll-Free: (800) 551-5554
Alameda County: (510) 250-5270
Contra Costa County West:
(510) 250-5270
Contra Costa County East:
(925) 219-3325

California Rural Legal Assistance

Locations & Phone:
Gilroy: (831) 724-2253, (831) 688-6535;
Santa Rosa, CA: (707) 528-9941
Website: <http://www.crla.org>

East Bay Community Law Center

Location: Berkeley, CA
Phone: (510) 548-4040
Website: <http://www.ebclc.org>

Homeless Action Center

Locations & Phone:
Oakland: (510) 836-3260 ext. 301
Berkeley, CA: (510) 540-0878
Website: <http://www.homelessactioncenter.org>

Centro Legal de la Raza

Location: Oakland, CA
Phone: (510) 437-1554
Website: <http://www.centrolegal.org>

Immigrant Legal Resource Center (*counsels about immigration consequences of criminal records*)
Location: San Francisco, CA
Phone: (415) 255-9499
Website: <http://www.ilrc.org>

Law Foundation of Silicon Valley: Fair Housing Law Project & Health Legal Services
Location: San Jose, CA
Phone: (408) 293-4790
Website:
<http://www.lawfoundation.org>

Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights: Second Chance Legal Clinic
Location: San Francisco, CA
Phone: (415) 814-7610
Website: <http://www.lccr.com>
Website 2: <http://www.lccr.com/programs/immigrant-justice/immigrant-post-conviction-relief-project/>

Legal Aid Society — Employment Law Center
Location: San Francisco, CA
Phone: (415) 864-8208,
Toll-Free: (866) 864-8208
Website: <https://las-elc.org>

Legal Aid Society of San Mateo
Location: Redwood City, CA
Phone: (650) 558-0915,
Toll-Free: (800) 381-8898
Website: <http://www.legalaidsmc.org>

Legal Assistance for Seniors
Location: Oakland, CA
Phone: (510) 832-3040
Website: <http://www.lashicap.org>

Legal Assistance to the Elderly
Location: San Francisco, CA
Phone: (415) 538-3333
Website: <http://www.laesf.org>

Legal Services of Northern California
Location: Vallejo, CA
Phone: (707) 643-0054
Website: <http://www.about.lsnr.net>

Positive Resource Center
Location: San Francisco, CA
Phone: (415) 777-0333
Website:
<http://www.positiveresource.org>

Pro Bono Project
Location: San Jose, CA
Phone: (408) 998-5298
Website: <http://www.probonoproject.org>

Public Defender's Office, Alameda County
Locations & Phone:
Main Office: (510) 272-6600
Oakland: (510) 268-7400
Hayward: (510) 670-5000
Fremont: (510) 795-2600
Pleasanton, CA: (925) 551-6863
Website:
<http://www.co.alameda.ca.us/defender>

Public Defender's Office, San Francisco City and County
Location: San Francisco, CA
Phone: (415) 553-1671
Website: <http://sfpublicdefender.org>

Record Clearance Project at San Jose State University
Location: San Jose, CA
Phone: (408) 924-2758
Website: <http://www.sjsu.edu/justicestudies/programs-events/rcp>

Rubicon — *Rubicon legal services are provided to existing clients of their social services programs (career coaching, parenting classes, financial coaching)*
Location: Richmond, CA
Phone: (510) 412-1725
Website:
<http://www.rubiconprograms.org>

Senior Adults Legal Assistance
Location: San Jose, CA
Phone:
Main Office: (408) 295-5991
North County Toll-Free:
(650) 969-8656
South County Toll-Free:
(408) 847-7252
Website: <http://www.s393914827.initial-website.com>

Uncommon Law
Location: Oakland, CA
Phone: (510) 271-0310
Website: <http://uncommonlaw.org>

CENTRAL VALLEY & CENTRAL COAST

California Rural Legal Assistance
Locations & Phone:
Main Office: (415) 777-2752
Arvin: (661) 854-3839
Coachella: (760) 398-7261
Delano: (661) 725-4350
Fresno: (559) 441-8721
Hollister: (831) 724-2253
Madera: (559) 674-5671
Marysville: (530) 742-5191
Modesto: (209) 577-3811
Salinas: (831) 757-5221
Seaside (intakes on Mondays only):
(831) 757-5221
San Luis Obispo: (805) 544-7997
Santa Cruz: (831) 688-6535; Stockton:
(209) 946-0605; Watsonville, CA:
(831) 724-2253, (831) 688-6535
Website: <http://www.crla.org>

Central California Legal Services
Locations & Phone:
Fresno: (559) 570-1200
Merced: (209) 723-5466
Visalia, CA: (209) 723-5466
Website: <http://www.centralcallegal.org>

Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance (GBLA)
Location: Bakersfield, CA
Phone: (661) 325-5943
Website: <http://gbla.org/>

Legal Services for Seniors
Locations & Phone:
Salinas: (831) 442-7700
Seaside, CA" (831) 899-0492
Website:
<http://www.legalservicesforseniors.org>

Legal Services of Northern California
Locations and Phone:
Sacramento: (916) 551-2150
Auburn: (530) 823-7560
Chico: (530) 345-9491, Toll-Free: (800) 345-9491
Redding: (530) 241-3565, Toll-Free:
(800) 822-9687
Woodland, CA: (530) 662-1065
Website: <http://www.about.lsnr.net>

Senior Citizens Legal Services
Locations & Phone:
Santa Cruz: (831) 426-8824
Watsonville: (831) 728-4711
Hollister, CA: (831) 637-5458
Website: <http://www.seniorlegal.org>

UC Davis, Immigration Law Clinic

Location: Davis, CA
 Phone: (530) 752-6942
 Website:
<http://www.law.ucdavis.edu/clinics>

Voluntary Legal Services Program of Northern California — License Reinstatement Clinic

Location: Sacramento, CA
 Phone: (916) 551-2102
 Website: <http://www.vlsp.org>

Watsonville Law Center

Location: Watsonville, CA
 Phone: (831) 722-2845
 Website:
<http://www.watsonvillelawcenter.org>

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**A New Way of Life Reentry Project**

Location: Los Angeles, CA
 Phone: (323) 563-3575
 Website: <http://www.anewwayoflife.org>

Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus Immigrant Rights Program

Location: Los Angeles, CA
 Phone: (213) 977-7500
 Website:
<http://www.advancingjustice-la.org/>

Bet Tzedek

Location: Los Angeles, CA
 Phone: (323) 939-0506
 Website: <http://www.bettzedek.org>

California Rural Legal Assistance

Locations & Phone:
 Coachella: (760) 398-7261
 El Centro: (760)-353-0220
 Oxnard: (805): 483-8083
 Santa Barbara: (805) 963-5982
 Santa Maria: (805) 922-4563
 Vista, CA: (760) 966-0511
 Website: <http://www.crla.org>

Harriet Buhai Center for Family Law

Location: Los Angeles, CA
 Phone: (213) 388-7515
 Website: <http://www.hbcfl.org>

Inland Empire Latino Lawyers Association Legal Aid

(wage garnishment due to unpaid child support)

Location: Riverside, CA
 Phone: (951) 369-3009
 Website: <http://www.iella.org>

Inner City Law Center

Location: Los Angeles, CA
 Phone: (213) 891-2880
 Website: <http://www.innercitylaw.org>

Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles

Location: Los Angeles, CA
 Phone: (800) 399-4529
 Website: <http://www.lafla.org>

Legal Aid Foundation of Orange County & Community Legal Services of Southeast Los Angeles County

Locations & Phone:
 Anaheim: (714) 571-5200, Toll-Free: (800) 834-5001
 Compton: (310) 631-7382
 Norwalk: (562) 864-9935, Toll-Free: (800) 834-5001
 Santa Ana, CA: (714) 571-5200, Toll-Free: (800) 834-5001
 Website: <http://www.legal-aid.com>

Legal Aid Foundation of Santa Barbara County - Legal Resource Center

Locations & Phone:
 Santa Barbara: (805) 568-3303
 Santa Maria: (805) 349-1289
 Lompoc, CA: (805) 737-5452
 Website: <http://www.lafsbcc.org>

Legal Aid Society of San Diego

Location: San Diego, CA
 Phone: (877) 534-2524
 Website: <http://www.lassd.org>

Mental Health Advocacy Services

Location: Los Angeles, CA
 Phone: (213) 389-2077
 Website: <http://www.mhas-la.org>

Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County

Locations: Glendale; Pacoima; El Monte, CA
 Phone: (800) 433-6251
 Website: <http://www.nlsla.org>

Pepperdine Legal Aid Clinic

Location: Los Angeles, CA
 Phone: (213) 347-6300 ext. 4413
 Website: <http://urm.org/services/clinics/#PepperdineLegal>

Public Defender's Office, Orange County

Location: Santa Ana, CA
 Phone: (714) 834-2144
 Website: <http://www.pubdef.ocgov.com/main.htm>

San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program

Location: San Diego, CA
 Phone: (619) 235-5656
 Website: <http://www.sdvip.org>

STATEWIDE**Prison Law Office**

Location: San Quentin, CA; Berkeley, CA
 Phone: N/A —
Due to the high volume of inquiries they receive, the Prison Law Office requests that people get in touch with them by mail at:
 Prison Law Office General Delivery
 San Quentin, CA 94964
 Website: <http://www.prisonlaw.com>

Center for Human Rights

Location: Los Angeles, CA
 Phone: (213) 388-8693
 Website:
<http://www.centerforhumanrights.org>

UC Davis Law School, Prison Law Clinic

Location: Davis, CA
 Phone: (530) 752-6942
 Website:
<http://www.law.ucdavis.edu/clinics>

University of the Pacific McGeorge School of Law, Prisoner Civil Rights Mediation Clinic

Location: Sacramento, CA
 Phone: Michael Colatrella, Clinical Professor: (916) 739-7303
 Website: http://www.mcgeorge.edu/Students/Academics/Experiential_Learning/Legal_Clinics/Prisoner_Civil_Rights_Mediation_Clinic.htm

other helpful resources

1 Roadmap to Reentry: A California legal guide

Our *Roadmap to Reentry* is a comprehensive reference guide about the legal rights of people with records in California. It explains how a criminal record impacts a person's rights in every aspect of life—from ID, housing, employment, public benefits to family reunification to parole and probation issues to cleaning up criminal records, and more. Root & Rebound publishes the *Roadmap to Reentry* and updates it every year for people with records and in reentry from prison or jail, their families, friends, advocates, and service providers. Our *Roadmap to Reentry* is available as a searchable Wiki at roadmap.rootandrebound.org, or you can order a hard copy at www.rootandrebound.org/roadmap or by calling us at (510) 279-4662.

2 Reentry Planning Toolkits

Our *Reentry Planning Toolkits* are concise reentry planning workbooks that contain the most critical know-your-rights information about having a record, checklists for reentry planning, and key information around gaining ID, voting rights, navigating the employment search, family reunification, education, parole and probation issues, record-cleaning, and more. We have three versions tailored to different audiences: 1) people with records, 2) their family members, and 3) service providers. To order a copy, go to www.rootandrebound.org/roadmap or call us at (510) 279-4662.

3 Reentry Legal Hotline

For any questions about your rights with a record, you can call our Reentry Legal Hotline at (510) 279-4662, any Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. PST, and speak to a member of our legal team. We can provide legal information about the impact of a criminal record, advocacy support, and referrals. We accept calls from people with records, family and loved ones, advocates, and service providers supporting people impacted by the criminal justice system. We also accept collect calls from people who are currently incarcerated.

4 California Employers' Fair Chance Hiring Toolkit

The *Fair Chance Hiring Toolkit* was developed to educate and empower employers to implement fair hiring practices for job applicants with records, and to develop best practices for recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining employees in reentry. It is also a tool for workforce development professionals and job seekers to use to advocate for fair chance employment in California. To get your own copy, visit <http://www.rootandrebound.org/ca-fair-chance-toolkit>, email info@rootandrebound.org, or call us at (510) 279-4662.