Planning for Release — What's Real and What's Not

Getting the vote is the first half. What happens the day you walk out is the second half, and a few persistent rumors inside can cost you real time and money if you believe them. Here's what's actually true.

Three things that are NOT real — don't plan around them

- **There is no free vehicle from the Small Business Administration (SBA).** No federal program hands out cars to people leaving prison.
- **There is no "$25,000 for tools" program.** No agency — federal, state, or otherwise — gives out a lump sum for tools or equipment just because you're being released.
- **There is no free money simply for having been incarcerated.** No program pays out cash grants on that basis alone.

If someone tells you different, ask them exactly which agency and exactly which form — most of the time, there isn't one.

Social Security — what's actually true

- Retirement benefits require roughly **10 years of work history** with contributions paid in, and start at **age 62**.
- **No Social Security benefit is payable for any month spent in jail or prison** — this applies to retirement, disability, and SSI alike.
- Benefits suspended after **30+ continuous days in custody** are reinstated **starting the month after release** — but you'll need to contact the Social Security Administration directly to confirm and restart payment; it isn't automatic in every case.
- **If you were confined 12 months or longer, SSI eligibility ends completely** — you'll need to file a **brand-new application** after release, not just ask to turn it back on.
- The SSA does not provide transportation, tools, or clothing assistance.

Driver's license renewal

A Texas license runs on roughly a 6-year cycle. Renewal generally requires an **in-person application at a Texas DPS office**, unless you qualify for online, mail, or phone renewal. TDCJ doesn't mail the driver's manual, but copies are in TDCJ law libraries. Renewal costs roughly $25 — confirm the current fee with DPS before you go, since state fees change.

Small business — what's actually true

The SBA does not give away grant money. It helps people **apply for loans** and connects them to **existing grant programs** — it's not itself a source of free cash. Any real small-business path needs a genuine

business plan and references, same as for anyone else. Start at **sba.gov**.

Where to go for everything else

- **Dial 2-1-1** (or **(877) 541-7905** if 2-1-1 doesn't connect) — a free, anonymous, statewide hotline for housing, food, benefits help, and almost everything else below. You don't need your own phone; a borrowed phone or a library phone works fine.
- **Free resources at inmatedesk.com/resources** — TDCJ policies and more free parole and reentry guides as we add them.
- **Your parole officer and local reentry programs** — ask for the current resource list for your release city or county. It will have more current, more specific contacts than any general guide can.

Checklist before you're released

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[ ] Confirmed whether Social Security benefits need reinstating or a new application
[ ] Confirmed current Texas DPS driver's license renewal requirements and fee
[ ] Ignored any "free vehicle," "$25,000 for tools," or "free money" claims
[ ] Saved the 2-1-1 number
[ ] Found reentry resources for your release city/county (2-1-1 or your parole officer)
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