

Poole/Czarnecki/Taylor checklists

Documents to gather

Document	How helpful?	Notes
Past letters to the Parole Board Past Commutation Petitions	May have powerful quotes and insights about remorse and rehabilitation	
Letters exchanged between you and family/friends	May show your support network in a meaningful way	
Letters from your supporters (family, friends, chaplains, teachers, etc.)	May show your support network in a meaningful way	
Job offers	Shows how you will be active in the community upon release	
Newspaper articles	May provide context and family history	Related to the offense; family weddings or obituaries; areas you or your family grew up in.
Photos	Can help people understand details about your life and case	Photos can be of you, family, friends, or important locations (e.g., childhood homes, schools, etc.).
Artwork	Can explain how you were feeling at a certain time or changes you've undergone as you've matured	Song lyrics, paintings, drawings, poetry, etc.
Evaluations by experts	Can show context and better describe your state of mind at specific times	By experts of important social members, like chaplains, teachers, and social workers.
Certificates of achievement Degrees Awards Favorable work assignment evaluations Related documents	Can show your initiative and growth	We understand that people serving long sentences are often put on long wait lists for programs. But you can include kites where you asked about joining a program or send kites now asking to get involved. You can also make a list of things you've done in your free time to better yourself (e.g., reading, studying, etc.).

Documents to gather, cont'd.

Document	Approximate dates of records	Notes
Formal life records; examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth certificate • School records (high school, GED, etc.) • Transcripts • Medical • Financial • Benefits (e.g., food stamps) 		If you or a family member cannot gather these records, or if there is a money cost associated with gathering them, an attorney can collect them later.

Add your notes here:

Preparing for the future

If you don't currently have answers to these questions, that's okay!

Things to consider	Your notes
<p>What jobs have you held in and outside of prison?</p> <p>What skills or certifications do you have?</p>	
<p>What hobbies do you have or want to have?</p> <p>What hobbies do you find interesting?</p>	
<p>What kind of work might you want to do on the outside? Why?</p>	
<p>Do you have ideas for where you may want to live with and with who? Why do you feel that is a good option?</p>	
<p>Do you have people who can support you when you're released? How will they provide support?</p>	

Add your additional notes here:

Focus on your well-being

Dr. Daniel Keating, an expert in brain science, identifies two major processes that promote resilience at any age: **social connection** and **mindfulness**. Social connection can be with family, peers, spiritual figures, mentors/mentees, or others who support you. Mindfulness refers to your identity and life purpose—you might find meaning in your work assignment, learning a new trade, building religious community, or pursuing a college degree. It looks different for everyone, but over time, you can rewire your brain through connection and purpose. “Social connections enhance resilience in part by elevating the activity of the neurohormones serotonin and oxytocin, both of which are associated with positive emotions. More critically, they are also biological antagonists to cortisol, limiting and reducing dysregulated stress responses. At both the behavioral and biological level, **resilience is possible**, although it can be challenging to achieve,” says Dr. Keating.¹

As you prepare for what comes ahead, there are important things you can do now to support your well-being, including:

- Exercising.
- Staying ticket free.
- Engaging in hobbies if available (art, reading, writing, cards, etc.).
- Communicating with friends and family as much as possible.

¹ Daniel P. Keating, Ph.D. (Departments of Psychology, Psychiatry, and Pediatrics, University of Michigan), *Summary of Adolescent Developmental and Neurodevelopmental Science in re Juvenile Life Without Parole* (2020), p 20.