



# RETURNING TO THE COMMUNITY: HEALTH CARE AFTER INCARCERATION

A Guide for Health Care Reentry

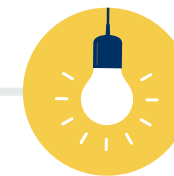


# VIEW YOUR ROADMAP TO BETTER HEALTH



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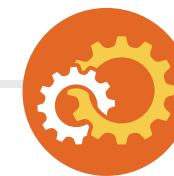


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## GETTING STARTED

Returning to the community is overwhelming. You have immediate needs and priorities to take care of—like getting identification and other important documentation, finding a job, and making sure you have food, transportation, and a steady place to stay.

While your health might not be the first thing on your mind, taking care of your physical and behavioral health is key to having a successful life after release. Continuing any treatments, care plans, and prescription medications, including getting support for substance use, are important ways to stay healthy.

There are people who want to help you, and services in place to support you. Many of the same people who can help with your immediate needs, can help with your health care needs. This includes helping you find the right health coverage, so you can pay for health care visits and medications.

This resource will help you:

1. Take charge of your health and give you tips on how to speak up for your health care needs during and after incarceration
2. Connect to free and affordable health care services
3. Find local programs or benefits and people who can help you connect to these resources

### How to Use this Guide

This Roadmap has 4 steps to help you.

Throughout the document, you'll find lists of common health care terms and resources. These lists include people that can help you find documents, medical records, and other benefits including food, housing, and transportation support. There's also a section for you to take notes.

Use this guide with the [Roadmap to Better Care](#) to help connect you to health care services.

**Start leading a healthier life now.**

## Step 1:

# KNOW YOUR HEALTH NEEDS

**Knowing about your own health and how to stay healthy will help you find the care and services you need. Using preventive services—regular check-ups to prevent health problems—can help you manage your physical and behavioral health.**

Physical and behavioral health are key to your overall health. Physical health includes issues with your body, such as diabetes or high blood pressure. Behavioral health includes your emotional, mental, and social well-being. Your behavioral health affects how you think, feel, and act as you cope with life. Behavioral health conditions are common and can include issues related to mental health and substance use conditions. It's just as important as your physical health.

About 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. experience mental health conditions. The rates are even higher for people who are incarcerated. But there are resources available to get help.

Below are 10 questions about your current and past health that may help you better understand your situation and what you might need to ask for as part of your health care.

1. Are there any past or current life experiences I need help working through?
2. Will talking to a professional or someone who has had similar experiences help me better understand the choices I've made?
3. Do I have any health issues, such as pain in my body, that a health care provider can help me with?
4. Does diabetes, heart problems, weight issues, or using drugs or alcohol run in my family?
5. Do I currently take any medications a provider prescribed to me and do I need a refill soon?
6. Has substance use ever been a problem for me?
7. Would it be helpful to talk to someone about substance use?
8. Have I seen a doctor, health care provider, been hospitalized, or visited the emergency room/urgent care for anything recently or in the past?
9. How will seeing a doctor or a health care provider improve my overall health and life after release?
10. Am I worried about how to pay for my medicine or my appointments with health care providers?



## TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR PHYSICAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

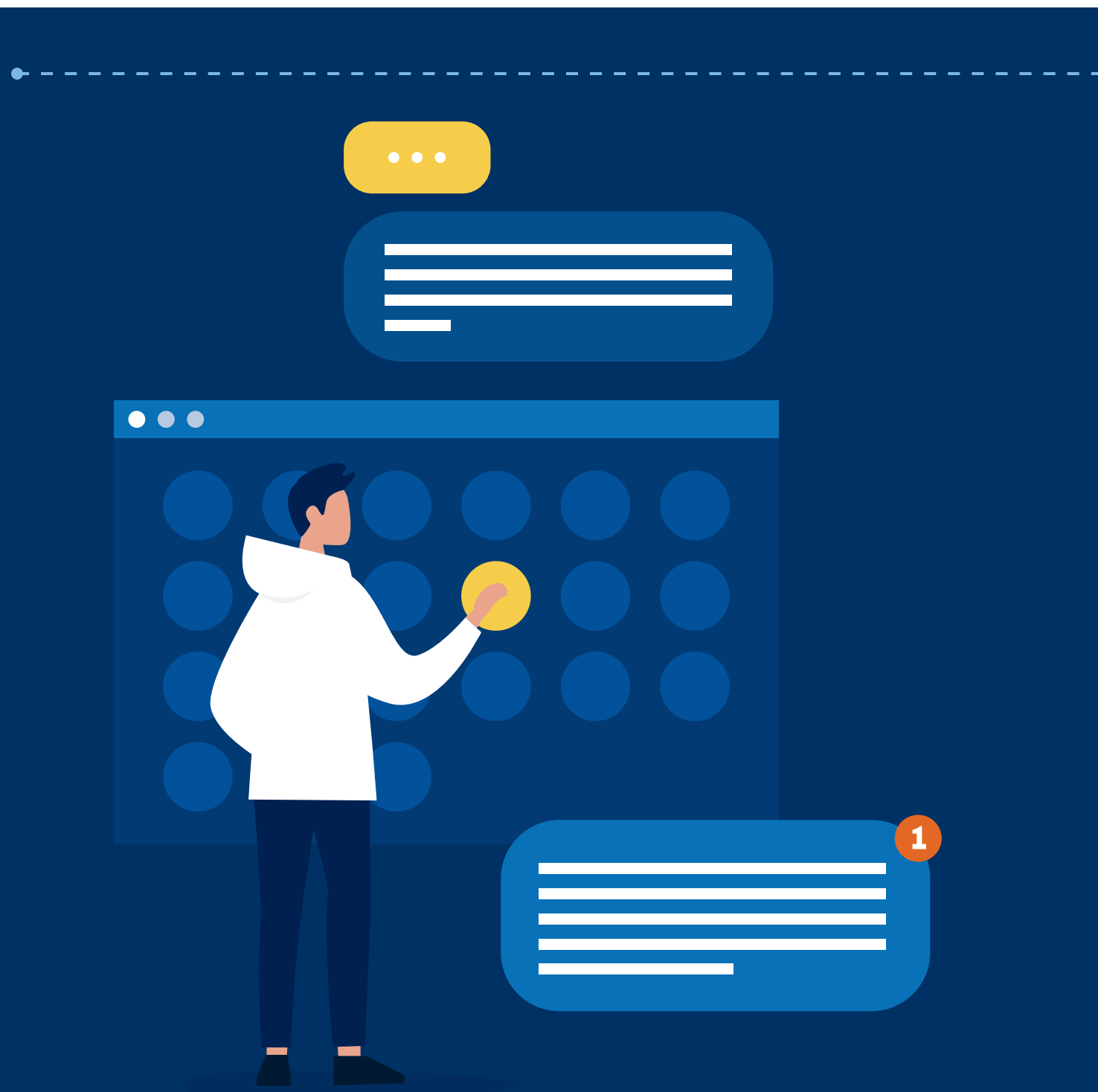
**By taking care of your physical health, mental health, and addressing substance use concerns, you'll be better able to:**

- Deal with the stresses of life
- Be physically healthy
- Have good relationships
- Work productively

# EMERGENCY AND CRISIS INFORMATION



**Need help now? Use these free hotlines for help. If you're in a crisis, have an emergency, or facing a life-threatening event, call 911 or go to an emergency department.**



## **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**

**[988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)**

Call or text 988, or chat online at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org), for crisis support. The Lifeline is a 24-hour, toll-free, private suicide prevention phone number. When calling this number, your call is routed to the nearest crisis center.

## **Veterans Crisis Line**

**[veteranscrisisline.net](https://veteranscrisisline.net)**

Call 988 and press 1 to contact the Veterans Crisis Line. Veterans may also reach the Veterans Crisis Line with the previous phone number — 1-800-273-8255 and press 1 — through text (838255), and chat ([VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat)).

This is a private and free hotline. It connects veterans in crisis to qualified and caring responders from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Family and friends of veterans may also use this service.

Please visit the Veterans Crisis Line website for more information: [veteranscrisisline.net](https://veteranscrisisline.net).

## **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline**

**[samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline](https://samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline)**

Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) for support with substance use or mental health concerns.

This hotline is confidential and free. You can reach them 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and talk to English or Spanish agents. They can help you get referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based groups.

For more information on substance use, mental health concerns, and types of treatment, please visit [findtreatment.samhsa.gov](https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov).

To find resources and information on treatment options and support services for mental health, substance use and alcohol use, please visit: [samhsa.gov/find-support](https://samhsa.gov/find-support).

## **National Sexual Assault Hotline**

**[rainn.org/resources](https://rainn.org/resources)**

Call 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) to talk to a trained staff member who can provide confidential crisis support. This hotline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Online chat is also available in English ([hotline.rainn.org/online](https://hotline.rainn.org/online)) and Spanish ([hotline.rainn.org/es](https://hotline.rainn.org/es)).

## **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

**[thehotline.org](https://thehotline.org)**

Call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) to speak to an advocate for free and confidential support. The hotline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and also offers an online chat and text messaging (text "START" to 88788) services.

## **StrongHearts Native Helpline**

**[strongheartshelpline.org](https://strongheartshelpline.org)**

Call 1-844-7NATIVE (762-8483) for support. This safe, confidential, and anonymous helpline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, offering culturally-appropriate support and advocacy for Native Americans and Alaska Natives. StrongHearts Native Helpline also offers an online chatline.

## Step 2:

# THINGS TO KNOW

### Gather Information about Your Health

Before you're released, start gathering information about your health. It is important to find out what services you'll need after you're released. Figure out what you want to focus on and have a plan that will help you be healthy and successful.

#### Here's a checklist of information to gather:

- Copies of my medical records, medical discharge paperwork, and transition documents

**TIP: Ask for a copy of your medical record from the medical staff at your facility at least 60 days before your release. They can provide your records to you in a safe and secure way after your release.**

- List of current medications I need to continue after release

**TIP: The medical staff at your facility can help provide a supply of discharge medications and other necessary medical supplies.**

- Any health issues, questions, or concerns to discuss with my new provider, including care that I may have avoided or was delayed while I was incarcerated (e.g., dental cleanings)
- Contact information for the medical facility I visited before incarceration (if I'm planning to return to the same city/state I lived before)
- List of medical facilities in the city or state where I plan to live after I'm released
- List of cultural, ethnic, religious, or other groups that could help give me positive support and connection after my release, if I want this type of support



## Things to Think About

- Who can help me connect with the places and services I need?
- What is my support network? Where will I be when I get out?
- If you need to, search for a local health center at <https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/>

## Questions to Ask

- Do I have enough medication, and do I need to ask about take home doses before being released?
- Is an appointment already set up with my community health care provider?
- Can I use peer support specialists to help deal with any overwhelming needs after release?
- Are there connections or information about a local reentry organization or council in the community I'll be returning to?
- Do I have contacts for my local health department and state Medicaid department?
- Do I meet the requirements for any Safety Net Programs (programs in states that provide services to people who don't have health coverage)?
- Do I have any immediate dental needs?



## People and Titles to Know

Titles may be different at each facility. Here are some examples of people and titles you might come across as you move from a facility to the community during reentry in your health journey:

- **Certified Application Counselor** helps people find health coverage through Medicaid, including completing application and enrollment forms.
- **Community Reentry Team** helps people leaving prison or jail find a job, get housing, support their children and families, and contribute to their communities.
- **Care Coordinator** helps manage health care services for patients and share information between health care providers.
- **Case Manager** helps people gain access to needed medical, social, educational, and other services.
- **Clinical Social Worker** provides counseling and therapy services, case management, and other support.
- **Discharge Planner** works with people nearing their release date to get ready for life after incarceration.
- **Jail Release Navigator** helps people leaving prison or jail get health care and other services.
- **Marketplace Navigator** helps people find health coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace®, including completing application and enrollment forms.
- **Medical Staff** includes doctors (MD – Medical Doctor, or DO – Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine), nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, or physician assistants to help a patient access a range of health care services.
- **Mentor/Credible Messenger** connects with and motivates people, often based on their own personal experience of incarceration, to successfully re-enter the community and address challenges and new opportunities.
- **Probation/Parole Officer** checks on people released under court supervision, before their trial or after sentencing.
- **Peers/Peer Support Specialist** is someone with lived experience who has been successful in the recovery process from mental health and/or substance use conditions who helps provide support to others experiencing similar challenges.
- **Reentry Nurse/Specialist/Coordinator** gives guidance and support to people going back to their communities after being in prison or jail.
- **Social Worker** manages cases and helps people find treatment and other ways to improve their healing, health, and well-being.
- **Transition Coordinator** provides people leaving prison or jail with resources to meet their specific needs. They also schedule all outpatient appointments in the community.



### Step 3:

## APPLY FOR HEALTH COVERAGE

**When in a correctional facility, they provide your health services. But, once you are released, you will need health coverage to help pay for health care services. This step outlines the different options for health coverage and then gives you information on how to find out more and apply.**

First, find out if your jail or prison has a pre-release or discharge program. If yes, ask how you can participate to help determine what health coverage you are eligible for and see if they can assist you in applying for the health coverage.

### What are the options? How and where do I apply?

#### Medicaid

- Medicaid is free or low-cost health insurance for eligible low-income adults, children, pregnant women, elderly adults, and people with disabilities.
- Many people who are incarcerated or are being released from incarceration, including adults without children, are eligible for Medicaid based on their income.
- Dental coverage in Medicaid depends on your state. There may be emergency coverage or further care. Check with your plan once enrolled to find out.
- You can get more information and apply for Medicaid by visiting the Medicaid.gov State Overviews webpage and clicking on your state in the drop-down menu to access state-specific information to see if you qualify and how to enroll: [medicaid.gov/state-overviews/index.html](https://www.medicaid.gov/state-overviews/index.html). Many correctional facilities offer direct assistance to help residents apply for and be determined eligible for Medicaid either before or just after release.

**TIP: Even if you applied for Medicaid before and didn't meet the requirements, you might be eligible now. Also, youth formerly in foster care are eligible for Medicaid until age 26 regardless of what state they currently live in.**



- Depending on your state, you might be enrolled in Medicaid while incarcerated for some services. Enrolling in Medicaid while you're incarcerated can help you get benefits sooner after release. Ask about health coverage as early as possible.
- If you think you might meet the requirements for Medicaid but are not yet enrolled, try to start or send in your application before you are released. If you are already enrolled in Medicaid, make sure you're still enrolled by confirming your status with the state Medicaid agency. Also make sure that your benefits will start as soon as possible after your release. Find out more: [www.medicaid.gov/about-us/beneficiary-resources/index.html](http://www.medicaid.gov/about-us/beneficiary-resources/index.html).
- If you think you are enrolled but don't have a card, ask your state's Medicaid agency for a copy of your Medicaid card. Learn how to replace your Medicaid card here: [www.medicaid.gov/faq/how-do-i-replace-my-medicaid-card/index.html](http://www.medicaid.gov/faq/how-do-i-replace-my-medicaid-card/index.html).
- Learn more about the requirements to enroll in Medicaid in your state: [www.medicaid.gov/about-us/beneficiary-resources/index.html#statemenu](http://www.medicaid.gov/about-us/beneficiary-resources/index.html#statemenu).

## Medicare

- Medicare is the health coverage program for people who are 65 and older or for people with a qualifying disability or end stage renal disease.
- Medicare can include Original Medicare, which includes Part A (Hospital Insurance) and Part B (Medical Insurance), like for doctor visits.
- Medicare also has Medicare Advantage Plans, Medicare drug plans, and other Medicare health plans to offer additional payments.
- To apply, visit [Medicare.gov](http://Medicare.gov).
- When your incarceration ends, there are specific times when you can sign up. *See page 18, for more detail.* This includes the day after you are released, so review now and plan ahead.
- To get help applying, contact a local Senior Health Insurance Program counselor in your area for help in choosing and enrolling in a plan. To find a SHIP counselor near you, visit: <https://www.shiphelp.org/>.
- Visit Medicare.gov Get Help Paying Costs webpage: <https://www.medicare.gov/basics/costs/help>.
- In most cases, Original Medicare will not cover vision or dental services. However, some Medicare Advantage Plans (Part C) offer extra benefits that Original Medicare doesn't cover — like vision, hearing, or dental. Contact the plan for more information.
- Learn more about the requirements to enroll in Medicare: [www.medicare.gov/basics/get-started-with-medicare/sign-up/ready-to-sign-up-for-part-a-part-b](http://www.medicare.gov/basics/get-started-with-medicare/sign-up/ready-to-sign-up-for-part-a-part-b).

## Medicare and Medicaid (also called Dual Eligible)

- If you are 65 and older or have a disability **AND** you have limited income, you may qualify for both Medicare and Medicaid.
- Apply for both Medicare and Medicaid to be sure. If you are eligible for both, it will cover more benefits at no or low cost to you.
- Dental and vision coverage may be covered by your Medicaid, depending on your state and the plan. Contact the plan to know what's included.

## HealthCare.gov (Marketplaces or your state's Marketplace)

- HealthCare.gov offers the federally and state run exchanges with private health coverage but include assistance in paying for premiums for those who are eligible. There are many qualified health plans to choose from. You can shop for plans based on your area and your need.
- To apply, visit [HealthCare.gov](http://HealthCare.gov) to find out if you might be eligible for a plan through the Health Insurance Marketplace.

**TIP: You can't buy health coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace® while serving a term in prison or jail. However, you have 60 days to enroll in health coverage when you're released from prison or jail, starting the day you're released.**

- Need help? Call 855-889-4325 or visit: [localhelp.healthcare.gov](http://localhelp.healthcare.gov).
- Learn more about the information required by the Marketplace: [www.healthcare.gov/verify-information/documents-and-deadlines/](http://www.healthcare.gov/verify-information/documents-and-deadlines/).
- There are minimum requirements all plans must meet. Some may also cover dental and vision benefits as well. Or you can look at a separate dental plan. [Learn more here.](#)

## Employer Based Insurance

- There are other private health coverage options. Most common is employer based plans.
- When you find employment, ask if they have benefits that include health coverage. If so, many people use this as their health coverage. Not every job offers health coverage, but be sure to ask.
- Dental and vision coverage will depend on your plan. Contact the plan or your benefits office to know what's covered.

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**Find out how to obtain supporting documentation necessary for obtaining coverage, including a birth certificate and social security card: [www.usa.gov/replace-vital-documents](http://www.usa.gov/replace-vital-documents).**

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## Special Considerations

Some groups of people or some life experiences might allow you to have other health coverage options. In addition, you might qualify for other types of help. If you aren't sure, ask questions to find out more.

Other Coverage Options:

- Are you a veteran? If so, reach out to the Veterans Administration (VA) to find out if you have any coverage through the VA. Find out more: <https://www.va.gov/>.
- Are you an American Indian or Alaska Native? The Indian Health Service (IHS) is responsible for providing federal health services to American Indians and Alaska Natives.
  - If you qualify for services from IHS, you should contact your local Indian health care provider or visit [www.ihs.gov](http://www.ihs.gov).
  - For more information on special provisions for American Indians and Alaska Natives who qualify for Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program or the Marketplace, please visit [healthcare.gov/tribal](http://healthcare.gov/tribal) or [go.cms.gov/AIAN](http://go.cms.gov/AIAN).

## Other Types of Help:

- Start the process to apply for other benefits that you might need, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Special Supplemental Nutritional Program for Women, Infant and Child (WIC), Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), or other services.
- Your facility or a social worker may be able to help you apply before or after release.
- Visit <https://www.benefits.gov/> to search for services or dial [2-1-1](tel:2-1-1) to talk to someone in your area about services.

## More about Medicare

### Sign up for Original Medicare using a Special Enrollment Period

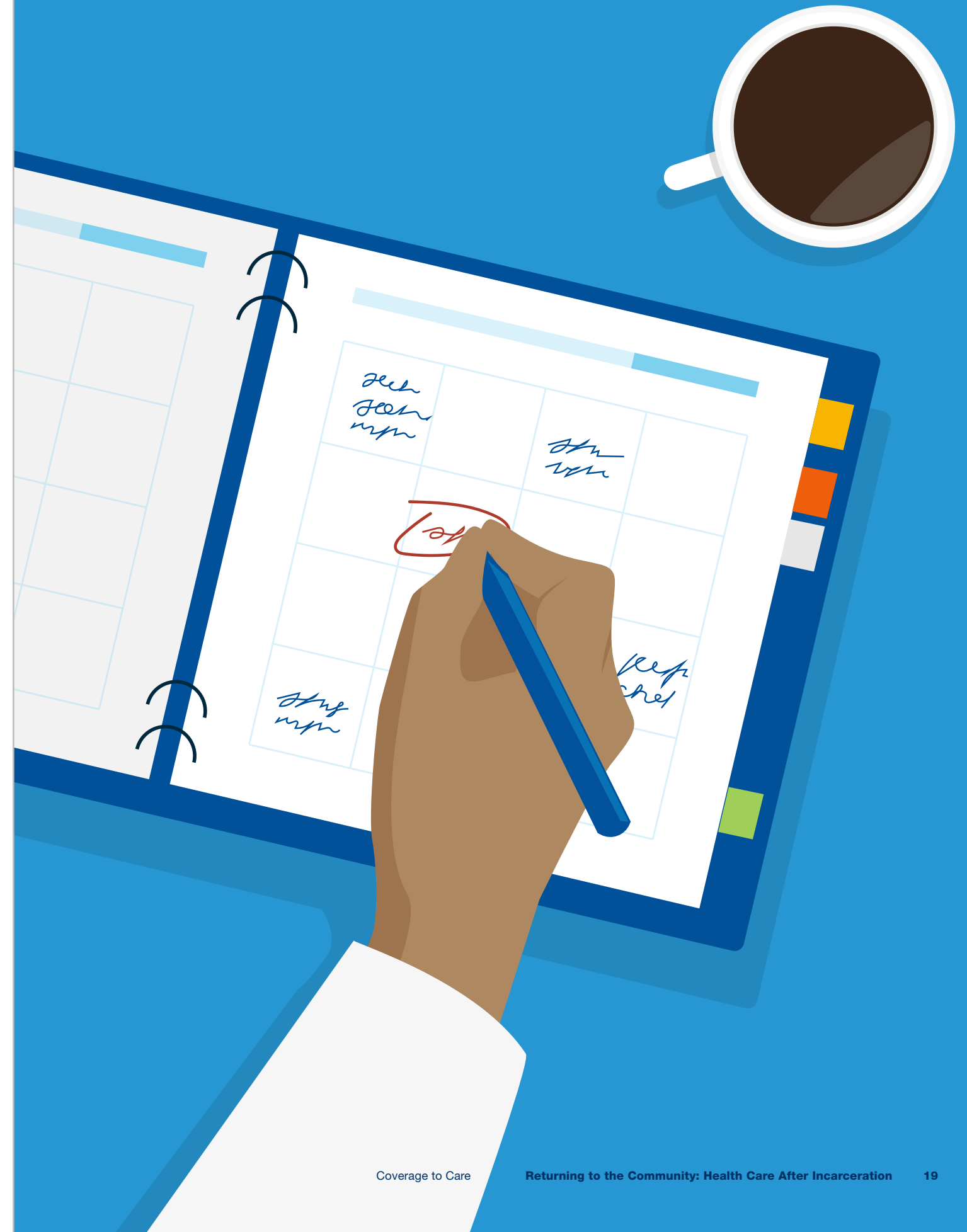
- Sign up starts: The day after you're released. Sign up ends: The last day of the 12th month after the month you're released.
  - Your coverage will start the month after you sign up. In some situations, you can also choose a coverage start date up to 6 months in the past. If you choose to begin coverage in the past and you apply for Medicare within the first 6 months of your release:
    - Your coverage will start on your incarceration release date.
    - You'll be responsible for paying Medicare premiums back to your coverage start date.
- If you choose to begin coverage in the past and you apply for Medicare more than 6 months after your release:
- Your coverage will start 6 months before the month you sign up.
  - You'll be responsible for paying Medicare premiums back to your coverage start date.
- There will not be late enrollment penalties.

### Sign up for Original Medicare during the General Enrollment Period

- The general enrollment period runs from January 1 – March 31.
- Coverage will start the month after you sign up.
- You may have to pay a late enrollment penalty depending on how long you wait to sign up after you're released from incarceration.

### Join a Medicare Advantage Plan, Medicare drug plan (Part D), or other Medicare health plan

- Generally, you can sign up for the first 2 full calendar months after you're released.  
**Remember:** You have to sign up for Medicare before you can join a plan.  
[Get details on how to sign up.](#)
- To join a plan you can:
- Contact the plan you want to join directly.
  - [Join a plan online.](#)
  - Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048.
- Coverage will start the first day of the month after the plan gets your application.
  - You may have to pay a Part D late enrollment penalty if you don't join a Medicare drug plan within 63 days of signing up for Original Medicare (and you don't have other creditable prescription drug coverage during that time).





#### Step 4:

## USE YOUR HEALTH COVERAGE

### **After you find and enroll in health coverage, you'll want to think about how to use your health coverage.**

Finding and enrolling in health coverage isn't the end of your journey. Maintaining your health is a lifelong commitment. An important next step is finding health care providers, like doctors, nurses, and therapists, who can get to know and support you. You may want to get connected to a peer support specialist to review your list of health needs, help you find the right health care providers, and help you schedule appointments.

Although you can get health care services from many different places, including the emergency department, it's best to get your regular care and services from a doctor, such as a primary care provider, who will get to know you and your needs.

You can find primary care providers in offices, clinics, hospitals and health centers nationwide. Depending on your health coverage and where you live, you may find a primary care provider at:

- Private medical groups and practices
- Ambulatory care centers
- Outpatient clinics
- Federally Qualified Health Centers
- Community clinics and free clinics
- School-based health centers
- Indian Health Service, Tribal, and Urban Indian Health Program facilities
- Veterans Affairs medical centers and outpatient clinics

**Learn more about when to use primary care and office visits for your health needs vs when to go to the emergency department with the [Know Before You Go fact sheet](#).**

## Here are some steps you can take to connect to services:

- Find a health care provider in the area you plan to live after release. Visit <https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/>.
- Make an appointment with your health care provider. For tips on choosing a provider, check out: [www.cms.gov/files/document/roadmap-better-care-english.pdf-0](http://www.cms.gov/files/document/roadmap-better-care-english.pdf-0).
- Need help with mental health, drugs, or alcohol? Visit [FindSupport.gov](http://FindSupport.gov) for help.

If you need further help connecting to health care and using your health coverage, you may wish to review the [Roadmap to Better Care](#) for more information on copays, where to go, and how to be part of your care.



# RESOURCES

## Reentry Resources

**The National Reentry Resource Center (NRRC)** is the nation's main source of information and guidance to reentry. NRRC develops resources and tools, facilitates information exchange, and supports reentry. Visit [nationalreentryresourcecenter.org](https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org) or call 866-536-8686 for help with:

- The reentry system
- Transitioning back into the community after being in prison or jail
- Creating or improving reentry programs and policies
- Getting involved in reentry services and processes

**The HHS Office of Minority Health (OMH) Health Coverage:**

- **Tips about the Health Insurance Marketplace®:** 1-800-318-2596 or [healthcare.gov/quick-guide/one-page-guide-to-the-marketplace](https://healthcare.gov/quick-guide/one-page-guide-to-the-marketplace)
- **Medicaid & CHIP Coverage:** 1-800-318-2596 or [healthcare.gov/medicaid-chip/getting-medicaid-chip](https://healthcare.gov/medicaid-chip/getting-medicaid-chip)
- **Get Started with Medicare:** 1-800-633-4227 or [medicare.gov/basics/get-started-with-medicare](https://medicare.gov/basics/get-started-with-medicare)

## Finding a Provider

[https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/Additional\\_Support](https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/Additional_Support)

## Additional Help

- **Health Coverage for Incarcerated People:** 1-800-318-2596 or [healthcare.gov/incarcerated-people](https://healthcare.gov/incarcerated-people)
- **Incarcerated and Recently Released Consumers:** 1-800-318-2596 or [cms.gov/marketplace/technical-assistance-resources/incarcerated-and-recently-released-consumers.pdf](https://cms.gov/marketplace/technical-assistance-resources/incarcerated-and-recently-released-consumers.pdf)
- **SAMHSA Treatment Locator:** 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or [findtreatment.samhsa.gov](https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov)
- **SAMHSA Resources:** 1-800-662-4357 or [www.samhsa.gov/find-support](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support) TTY: 1-800-487-4889 / Text your ZIP code to: 435748
- **211:** [www.211.org](https://www.211.org). This national, toll-free line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year to speakers of English and 180 other languages to connect individuals who need help with community organizations. Call 211 to be connected to trained community specialists who can help you find local resources and services for your health needs and more. You can find your local 211 here: [www.211.org/about-us/your-local-211](https://www.211.org/about-us/your-local-211)





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