Starting over after prison in Texas: first steps.

ID first, then work, housing, and your vote. Take it one step at a time. Help is free.

1. Get your papers back

Before release, TDCJ helps eligible people get a Social Security card, birth certificate, and state ID. Lost them? You can replace each one.

> **Tip:** have your birth certificate and Social Security number ready before you go to DPS.

Birth certificate (born in Texas)

- DSHS Vital Statistics: **$22** for a certified copy. Call **888-963-7111** (Mon–Fri, 8–4).
- A TDCJ offender ID counts as your main photo ID.

Social Security card

- **Free.** Start online at ssa.gov, or call **1-800-772-1213** (TTY 1-800-325-0778). It comes by mail in 5 to 10 business days.

Texas ID card (DPS)

- Bring proof of citizenship, Texas residency, identity, and your SSN. Make an appointment at a driver license office.
- **$16** (59 or younger), **$6** (60+), **$11** replacement. Card comes by mail in 2 to 3 weeks.

2. Your vote

It comes back once your whole sentence, including parole or probation, is done. Then register again. See our voting guide: whatwouldjesusprompt.org/voting-rights

3. Work

- **Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast:** free job search help and career advising.
- **Fidelity Bonding Program:** a free bond for your employer that covers your first six months. You need a job offer first.
- **Free Next Door kit** from What Would Jesus Prompt?: a rewritten resume, a cover letter, and local employers who are hiring.

4. Clearing or sealing a record

- **Expunction** clears an entry. It's mostly for arrests with no conviction. Convictions generally can't be expunged.
- **Nondisclosure** hides an offense. **Most felony convictions can't be sealed**; a felony generally only after deferred adjudication (5-year wait).
- Check TexasLawHelp's Fresh Start tool; talk to a lawyer.

Free help: call

Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast
1-888-469-JOBS (5627)

Houston Health Dept. Community Re-Entry
832-393-5467

2-1-1 Texas: food, housing, local help
Dial 2-1-1 or (877) 541-7905

TDCJ Rehabilitation & Reentry
(877) 887-6151

Free and low-cost legal help: sll.texas.gov/legal-help

Full guide, with every source: whatwouldjesusprompt.org/starting-over

Last checked: October 11, 2026. General information, not legal advice. What Would Jesus Prompt? is not a government office and is not part of any program listed here. Rules and numbers can change, so confirm with the official source.

Free from What Would Jesus Prompt? Questions or need free help? Use the request form at whatwouldjesusprompt.org