



RETURNING PARENT PACKET

Transition & Reunification Plan From Incarceration

HERE'S WHAT TO DO:



1. Read through the entire *Transition & Reunification Plan* (Returning Parent, Caregiver, & Child packets) so you know what questions are going to be asked of each person.



2. For this *Returning Parent Packet*, re-read each question & reflect. Write your response to questions & any next steps to take. Decide if each item is a High (H), Medium (M) or Low (L) priority task. If it doesn't apply, write "N/A" instead.



3. When you are within 3 or 4 months of release, mail the *Caregiver & Child* packets to the children's caregiver. The packets can also be downloaded at www.preptoparent.com

Ask the Caregiver & Child(ren) to complete the packets.



4. Upon release, when everyone is ready (you, caregiver, & children), schedule times to discuss and figure out next steps.

IMPORTANT: You should plan on 2 or 3 conversations instead of one "big" one. If someone isn't ready to talk about a topic, be prepared to patiently wait on them until they are ready.

Go through each packet one by one.

Transition & Reunification Plan

Basic Needs

You cannot build on a foundation that is not there. You must secure important documents, find stable housing, and take care of your health. Meeting basic needs like these create the right conditions for a relationship with your children to flourish. As you look at these questions, ask: Is it safe? Is it legal? Is it affordable? Avoid any situations that would jeopardize your freedom.

Question	My Response & Next Steps	Priority (H, M, L)
Are you able to access the internet upon release? Can you afford a basic mobile phone & service plan?	TIP: Get a library card for free internet access! LOTS of resources at our free website, www.reentryhelp.com	
Do you have a birth certificate, social security card, & valid license/ID?		
Do you have a safe place to stay that is parole approved? Is that with or without your children?		
Do you have reliable transportation?		
Do you have a reliable mailing address & way to organize important documents?		
Do you fully understand parole/release stipulations & where to go for check-ins?		
What needs sorted out with making (or receiving) child support payments?		
Are your children covered by insurance? If not, how will you get medical & dental insurance for your children?		

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Do you understand prescription medication instructions and where to get refills? What about scheduling important doctor appointments?		
How will you manage stress and your self-care upon release?		
Who can you lean on for personal support during the transition?		

Career Direction

Many of the needs we just looked at require MONEY. So what skills do you have? What kind of work would you like to do? Avoid easy street when it comes to making money. If an opportunity seems too good to be true, it usually is. There may not be anything glamorous about some of your job prospects but doing them with excellence can lead to better opportunities.

Question	My Response & Next Steps	Priority (H, M, L)
Are you going to be responsible for financially supporting your children? How quickly do you need to do that?		
What skills/training do you have that can help you find a job? What jobs fit those skills?		
Do you understand your household's monthly budget? How much do you need to make per hour to satisfy that budget?	TIP: To explore financial benefits, visit www.benefits.gov	

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Is there anyone you know who can help you find a job?	TIP: Tons of job prep & search resources at www.careeronestop.org	
Do you have a plan for childcare when you are unavailable?	TIP: Find and get financial help with childcare at childcare.gov	

Child Relationship

Reuniting with your child can be exciting & scary at the same time. There are a lot of unknowns. Take some time to reflect & set reasonable expectations. Figure out how to start those difficult & important conversations with your children, either leading up to - or soon after – your release.

Question	My Response & Next Steps	Priority (H, M, L)
What are you most looking forward to about returning to your children?	TIP: As you start this section... avoid one-word answers, okay? Dig deep!	
What hopes do you have about returning to your children?		
What fears or concerns do you have about them?		
What resentments or frustrations do you have towards them?		

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<p>When do you first hope to see your children after release (e.g. immediately, few days etc.)?</p> <p>How do you feel about that?</p>		
<p>What activity can you do together to break the ice (keep it simple)?</p>		
<p>What would you like to say to them in that first meeting (focus on them, not you)?</p> <p>IMPORTANT: Save “big” conversations for another time.</p>		
<p>How do you expect your living arrangements to impact your relationship with your children?</p>		
<p>How do you expect your children to act/treat you upon re-entry?</p> <p>What if this expectation is different from reality?</p>		

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<p><i>If you have adult children:</i> What expectations do you have about how your children help you meet basic needs (housing, transportation etc.)?</p> <p>What about their role in your healthcare?</p> <p>Are these reasonable & fair?</p>		
<p>What “big” conversations do you want to have with your children after release?</p> <p>How can you prepare for these (remember, more smaller conversations are usually better than one big one)?</p> <p>Where needed, are you prepared to forgive and ask for forgiveness?</p>		
<p>How do you expect your role as a parent to be different upon re-entry?</p>		

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<p>What bad habits, old friends etc. must you avoid upon release?</p> <p>If you fail at this, how will the children be impacted?</p>		
<p>Are there any specific ways that parole will impact your day-to-day life with your children?</p> <p>What about other ongoing consequences of conviction?</p>	<p>TIP: To help you understand the ongoing consequences of conviction, visit niccc.csgjusticecenter.org</p>	
<p>What have you told your children about your prison experience?</p> <p>What will you tell them upon your release?</p>		
<p>Do any of your children have special needs?</p> <p>Do you feel prepared to meet these needs?</p>		

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<p>What will you do if you need a break from your children?</p>		
<p>What positive discipline methods will you be using with your children?</p> <p>Are they age appropriate?</p>		
<p>What traditions, holidays & cultural practices are important to your family?</p>		
<p>What else do you want your children to know?</p> <p>What's the "best next step" in your relationship?</p>		

Transition & Reunification Plan

Your Relationship with the Caregiver

You & the caregiver may have different expectations & opinions of how your children should be parented. It is especially important that you get caught up on what has been going on in your absence! Reflect & consider what expectations, concerns, or feelings you have about the caregiver relationship.

Question	My Response & Next Steps	Priority (H, M, L)
<p>If you do not have custody of your children, will you have visitation with the caregiver/co-parent?</p> <p>If you do will have custody, how will it be shared?</p>		
<p>What “big” conversations do you need to have with the child’s caregiver?</p> <p>Where needed, are you prepared to forgive and ask for forgiveness?</p>		

Transition & Reunification Plan

<p>How can you express thanks to the caregiver for their efforts while you were away?</p>		
<p>What expectations do you have of the caregiver when you are released?</p> <p>What if these expectations are different from reality?</p>		
<p>How can you & the caregiver share power/responsibilities upon re-entry?</p> <p>What about you and the child's co-parent (if not the caregiver)?</p>		
<p>Any wishes or desires you should communicate to your children's caregiver before re-entry?</p>		
<p>Who can help you as a mediator (middleman) if things get difficult between you & the caregiver?</p> <p>What about between you & your children?</p>		

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<p>What other relatives or family friends are involved in your children's lives?</p> <p>How is your relationship with them?</p>		
<p>What else do you want the caregiver to know?</p> <p>What's the "best next step" in your relationship?</p>		

Goals

For the items above, look at the ones you marked as High (H) Priority. Which are the TOP THREE? Write a S.M.A.R.T. goal for each item (specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, & time-bound).

#1: _____

#2: _____

#3: _____



CAREGIVER PACKET

Transition & Reunification Plan With An Incarcerated Parent

WHAT IS THIS?

The incarcerated parent has likely taken Acceleron Learning's parenting course and is working on transition & reunification.

This packet contains important questions to help you and the child(ren) prepare for the parent's return.

IF YOU AND/OR THE CHILD ARE UNABLE TO COMPLETE THIS PACKET, PLEASE COMMUNICATE THAT TO THE RETURNING PARENT. IT WILL CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS UPON RELEASE.



1. Read both the *Caregiver & Child Packets*, so you know what questions will be ask of each person. You will need to photocopy part of this packet and all the Child Packet for EACH CHILD.



2. In this *Caregiver Packet*, write your response to questions & any next steps to take. Decide if each item is a High (H), Medium (M) or Low (L) priority task. If it doesn't apply, write "N/A" instead.
3. For the *Child Packet*, work with EACH CHILD to complete a copy.



4. Upon release, when everyone is ready (you, returning parent, & children), schedule times to discuss and figure out next steps.

IMPORTANT: You should plan on 2 or 3 conversations instead of one "big" one. If someone isn't ready to talk about a topic, be prepared to patiently wait on them until they are ready.

Go through each packet one by one.

Check out a TON of free resources at www.preptoparent.com

Transition & Reunification Plan

Returning Parent Relationship

Your relationship with the returning parent will be a factor in how things go when they return. In order to avoid assumptions & misunderstandings, you want to reflect on the questions below. Then communicate proactively about past hurts, frustrations, wishes & desires.

Question	My Response & Next Steps	Priority (H, M, L)
What are you most looking forward to about the parent's return?	TIP: As you start...avoid one-word answers, okay? Dig deep!	
What hopes do you have about the returning parent?		
What fears or concerns do you have about them?		
What resentments or frustrations do you have towards them?		
What "big" conversations do you need to have with the returning parent? Where needed, are you prepared to forgive and ask for forgiveness?		

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<p>What expectations do you have of the returning parent when they are released?</p> <p>What if these expectations are different from reality?</p>		
<p>Any wishes or desires you should communicate to the returning parent before re-entry?</p>		
<p>What expectations do the children have about the returning parent?</p> <p>Are these reasonable & fair?</p>		
<p>What bad habits, old friends, etc., old friends etc. must the returning parent avoid upon release?</p> <p>If they fail at this, how will the children be impacted?</p>		

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<p>What “big” conversations do the children want to have with their returning parent upon release?</p> <p>Where needed, are they prepared to forgive and ask for forgiveness?</p> <p>How can you help them prepare for these (remember, more smaller conversations are usually better than one big one)?</p>		
<p>How can you & the returning parent share power & co-parenting responsibilities upon re-entry?</p> <p>How will your role change?</p>		
<p>What other relatives or family friends are involved in the children’s lives?</p> <p>How is the returning parent’s relationship with them?</p>		
<p>Who can help you as a mediator (middleman) if things get difficult between you & the returning parent?</p> <p>Who can you lean on for support?</p>		
<p>What else do you want your returning parent to know?</p> <p>What’s the “best next step” in your relationship?</p>		



BEFORE WRITING ANYTHING ELSE, CREATE A PHOTOCOPY OF THE REST OF THIS PACKET FOR EACH CHILD.

CHILD'S NAME: _____

Physical Health

Give the parent as much detail as you can regarding the physical health & wellbeing of EACH CHILD.

Question	My Response & Next Steps	Priority (H, M, L)
Does the child have physical health issues that the returning parent needs to better understand?		
Who is the medical/professional contact for these issues? (Depending on custody arrangements, you may have to give written consent for this) How will insurance coverage be handled when their parent returns?		
What physical activities (e.g. exercise & active play) does the child enjoy?		

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Emotional Health

Use this section to explain any emotional issues that have affected EACH CHILD. Try to stick to the facts to give an objective view.

Question	My Response & Next Steps	Priority (H, M, L)
Does the child have any mental/behavioral health issues that the returning parent needs to better understand?		
Who is the medical/professional contact for these issues? (Depending on custody arrangements, you may have to give written consent for this)		
How does the child typically express their feelings?		
Have any specific behaviors emerged as a result of the parent's incarceration?		

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Depending on child's age, are there any issues with bedwetting, self-harm, or aggression etc.?		
What discipline challenges are you facing with the child?		
What methods of discipline seem to work well? Which methods do not?		

Education

Give updates regarding EACH CHILD'S school performance & social life.

Question	My Response & Next Steps	Priority (H, M, L)
What subjects does the child enjoy in school? Which do they struggle in?		
How are the child's grades or performance in school?		
Are there any known learning disabilities or developmental delays?		

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What extra-curricular activities does the child enjoy (e.g. sports, band etc.)?		
<i>For children 12 years & above:</i> What careers is the child interested in pursuing? What education plans do they have after high school (if nearing graduation)?		
How can the parent best help & support the child in school? Who are the best contacts at school (e.g. teacher's name)?		
How does the child relate to other kids their age?		
Do you have any thoughts on the child's circle of friends (e.g. best friend, problem friends, bullying etc.)?		

[CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE]

Transition & Reunification Plan

Day-to-Day Life

Answer the following questions to describe what daily life looks like in the household. This will help the returning parent understand how to enter this environment & help maintain stability for the children.

Question	My Response & Next Steps	Priority (H, M, L)
<p>What routines are currently in place?</p> <p>What are the “pain points” in the daily routine, if any?</p>		
<p>What are the child’s responsibilities at home?</p>		
<p>What activities does the child enjoy with you, the caregiver?</p>		

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<p>What activities does the child enjoy on their own or with friends?</p>		
<p>What else do you want the returning parent to know?</p> <p>What's the "best next step" in the relationship with their child?</p>		

Goals

For the items above, look at the ones you marked as High (H) Priority. Which are the TOP THREE? Write a S.M.A.R.T. goal for each item (specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, & time-bound).

#1: _____

#2: _____

#3: _____



CHILD PACKET

Transition & Reunification Plan with an Incarcerated Parent

WHAT IS THIS?

Your parent is working on a plan to prepare for release from incarceration.

This packet contains important questions to help you prepare for their return.

IF YOU ARE UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO COMPLETE THIS PACKET, PLEASE COMMUNICATE THAT TO THE RETURNING PARENT. IT WILL CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS UPON RELEASE.



1. Read the packet all the way through before writing anything down. It will help you understand what questions are asked.



2. Next, write your response to questions & any next steps to take. Your Caregiver may help you with this, *especially if you are under the age of 12.*

Decide if each item is a High (H), Medium (M) or Low (L) priority task. If it doesn't apply, write "N/A" instead.



3. After your parent is released, when everyone is ready (you, returning parent, & children), schedule times to discuss and figure out next steps.

IMPORTANT: You should plan on 2 or 3 conversations instead of one "big" one. If someone isn't ready to talk about a topic, be prepared to patiently wait on them until they are ready.

Your caregiver and returning parent have also completed packets. You will go through each packet one by one.



BEFORE WRITING ANYTHING BELOW, CREATE A PHOTOCOPY OF THIS PACKET FOR EACH CHILD.

CHILD'S NAME: _____



If child is under 12 years old, a caregiver should assist in filling out this packet.

Basic Needs

This section is to help you reflect on how your returning parent can help meet your basic needs, such as shelter, clothing, transportation, food etc.

Question	My Response & Next Steps	Priority (H, M, L)
How will your living situation change once the returning parent comes home?		
<i>For children 12 years & above:</i> Do you believe the returning parent can meet your basic needs?		
<i>For adult children:</i> Do you plan on supporting your parent (financial, living situation, healthcare etc.)? Any concerns that need to be discussed with the returning parent about this?		

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Safety

Express any concerns you have for your safety. Identify safe adults you can go to for help, as well as boundaries that need to be put in place with your returning parent.

Question	My Response & Next Steps	Priority (H, M, L)
Do you have any safety concerns about being around your returning parent?		
What boundaries do you need to put in place with your returning parent?		
Who can you go to for help if you are in danger?		
<p><i>For children 12 years & above:</i> What bad habits, old friends, etc. must your parent avoid upon release?</p> <p>If they fail at this, how will you be impacted?</p>		

Returning Parent Relationship

Use these questions to describe hopes, dreams, fears, & frustrations in your relationship with the returning parent. The questions may create a range of emotions, so make sure you identify someone you can talk with if you need support.

Writing out the answers now provides time, distance, & maybe even more courage than you'd have during a face-to-face conversation.

Transition & Reunification Plan

Question	My Response & Next Steps	Priority (H, M, L)
What are you most looking forward to about your parent's return?	TIP: As you start this section... avoid one-word answers, okay? Dig deep!	
What hopes do you have about your returning parent?		
What fears or concerns do you have about them?		
What resentments or frustrations do you have towards them?		
When do you first expect to see your parent after their release (e.g. immediately, after a few days, etc.)? How do you feel about that?		

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<p>What activity can you do together to break the ice (keep it simple)?</p>		
<p>What would you like to say to them in that first meeting?</p> <p>IMPORTANT: Save “big” conversations for another time.</p>		
<p>What “big” conversations do you want to have with your parent after release?</p> <p>Where needed, are you prepared to forgive and ask for forgiveness?</p> <p>How can you prepare for these (remember, more smaller conversations are usually better than one big one)?</p>		

Transition & Reunification Plan

<p>How do you think the relationship with your caregiver/other parent will change when your returning parent comes home?</p>		
<p><i>For children 12 years & above:</i> How do you expect your returning parent to act/treat you upon re-entry? What if this expectation is different from reality?</p>		
<p><i>For children 12 years & above:</i> Any wishes or desires you should communicate to your returning parent before re-entry?</p>		
<p>What else do you want your returning parent to know?</p> <p>What's the "best next step" in your relationship?</p>		

Transition & Reunification Plan

Goals

For the items above, look at the ones you marked as High (H) Priority. Which are the TOP THREE? Write a S.M.A.R.T. goal for each item (specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, & time-bound).

#1: _____

#2: _____

#3: _____
