

# Improving Discharge Planning from Jail and Prison

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Recommendations of the Women's Advocacy Project, 2003

## Who We Are

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The Women's Advocacy Project (WAP) began in 2003 with the goal of developing a group of leaders equipped to craft solutions to the problems facing incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. WAP is comprised of a diverse group of women who are working in the community, formally incarcerated, and/or current or former participants in treatment and alternative to incarceration (ATI) programs. In a climate where our perspectives are sorely lacking, WAP teaches women to draw from experiences with the criminal justice system to create and carry out strategies for change.

## Our Process

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From February - June 2003, we discussed how discharge planning can affect a person's ability to find housing upon release from jail or prison. By drawing connections between our own experiences, learning about the public systems that influence our lives, and envisioning solutions, we, the participants of the Women's Advocacy Project have formulated the following recommendations.

### ■ Upon entry into a correctional facility:

1. Provide everyone with a copy of "Connections," the resource guide for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people.
2. Assess everyone for:
  - Housing situation
  - Medical
  - Psychological health
  - Identification  
(Social Security card, birth certificate, non-driver's license, etc.)
  - Education/GED
  - Family and reunification needs
  - Job training/readiness
  - Other training and programs
3. Begin processes of obtaining necessary ID, GED, training, programs.
4. Create a checklist for each person to track these things throughout the period of their incarceration.

### ■ Before release from a correctional facility:

1. Secure and collect ID so that it is available to people upon release. Provide financial and administrative assistance to those people seeking to obtain ID. **Everyone should leave correctional facilities with the ID they need to access services in the community.**
2. Submit paperwork for benefits – Public Assistance, Medicaid, SSI, and housing (Section 8, supportive housing) – to avoid waiting periods after incarceration. Streamline forms – for example, there should be one PA application form for incarcerated people that is valid in all 5 boroughs.
3. Provide information about services in the community. These outside agencies should be allowed and encouraged to come to the correctional facilities to talk about their services.
4. Provide **accurate** information about eligibility for housing (Section 8 appeals process, limits on public housing).
5. Medical/psychiatric forms must be fully completed and **signed by a licensed physician** (not a physician's assistant).



WAP is a project of the Institute on Women & Criminal Justice at the Women's Prison Association.  
For more information, contact Sarah From at 212-674-1163, ext. 15, or [sfrom@wpaonline.org](mailto:sfrom@wpaonline.org).