

Initial Assessment and Planning – Prison Exit Program



haven
HOME, SAFE

1. PRISON EXIT IAP PROGRAM – HAVEN; HOME, SAFE

Haven; Home, Safe's Prison Exit IAP program works from the following three prisons:

- H.M Tarrengover Women's Prison. – Outreached once every two weeks.
- H.M Loddon Prison. – Outreached weekly.
- H.M Middleton prion. –Outreached Weekly.

Initial Assessment and Planning (IAP) – Prison Exit program is underpinned by the *Opening Doors Protocol for Local Area Service Networks & Entry points*.

Whilst Prison Exit IAP workers are based in the prisons, they are linked to the Entry Point services they are employed by. The initial assessment focuses on:

- Assistance to maintain current housing, including public or community based housing tenancies;
- Options for housing for the day of release;
- Other immediate homelessness related needs and risks;
- Assessment of immediate and longer term support needs; and
- Options for medium and long-term housing.

The program aims to facilitate improved access to the homelessness and broader service system, it is important to note that there is no guarantee access to housing through the Opening Doors Entry Points for everyone seeking assistance. It is anticipated that increased awareness amongst homelessness assistance services of the issues experienced by people exiting prison will improve opportunities for this group to access the service system.

2. PRISON EXIT IAP WORKERS

The assessment and referral process for pre-release access to housing support comprises the following:

1. As part of the reception/orientation into prison process, Corrections staff will identify prisoners on short-term sentences who have current public or social housing tenancies. Those who do are referred to the Prison Exit IAP worker ensure where practicable the tenancy is sustained. Tenancies may be extended for up to six months for public and long-term social housing tenancies and up to three months for transitional housing.
2. Prisoners identified as suitable for ReLink & ReConnect assistance, are referred to the appropriate program for assistance up to four months prior to release. Prisoners assessed as ineligible for these programs are referred to the Prison Exit IAP worker for assistance with access to homelessness service system resources and/or other housing options through Entry Points and long term social/ public housing. This should occur up to three months prior to release or immediately for prisoners on short sentences. Prisoners engaged with ReLink & ReConnect are not eligible for the Prison Exit IAP Program.
3. Initial assessment undertaken by the Prison Exit IAP worker will include completing Entry Point referral forms focusing on pre and post release circumstances. The forms are then forwarded as hard copy by fax to the Entry Point services most appropriate to the locational, housing, support and social needs of people exiting prison. Referrals are received by Entry Point services and held for prioritising at an appropriate time – generally determined by final confirmation of a person's release from prison, ideally two weeks prior to that date.
4. Referrals are generally made to Entry Points three months prior to an estimated release date which is based on the Earliest Eligibility Date, confirmed parole date, or sentence lapse date where parole has been denied.
5. Assessments should only be sent to a limited number of Entry Points in the interests of more appropriate consideration of preferred locations for clients, and of streamlining assessment and referral processes. Assessment of appropriate areas will consider connectedness with family, social links, access to services, as well as areas to avoid which may be connected to offending history or other negatively impacting issues for individuals.
6. Prison Exit IAP workers assist with Homeless with Support applications and general public housing applications prior to release.



7. Prison Exit IAP workers follow up with either Prison Programs staff or caseworkers regarding pending exit dates, and will be responsible for notifying the referral Entry Point/s as early as possible prior to exit. At this point prioritisation can occur for appropriate resources.

8. Where a prisoner does not have appropriate accommodation on the day of release, the Prison Exit IAP worker is responsible for assisting with access to accommodation options, with follow up to ensure that the Entry Points receiving referrals are aware of current accommodation details of referred clients and have begun the prioritisation process for access to housing and/or support resources.

3. ROLE OF CORRECTIONS

Corrections Victoria is responsible for identifying prisoners with housing needs and referring them to Prison Exit IAP where the following is identified:

- A current public or community housing tenancy is in place and the prisoner will be incarcerated for less than 6 months.
- The prisoner has come from unstable housing and/ or has a history of homelessness.
- The prisoner is ineligible for ReConnect.
- The prisoner has no housing to return to upon exit.

4. HOUSING ESTABLISHMENT FUND (HEF)

- Prison Exit IAP workers will access HEF where available to assist people exiting prison to access interim accommodation arrangements where resources through Entry Points are not immediately available on the date of release.
- A person presenting at any Entry Point service for housing assistance, who has recently exited prison and is not being assisted by a Prison Exit IAP worker, must not be refused HEF assistance on the basis of 'place of origin' or referred to a service based on a former address held prior to entry into prison. The area may no longer be appropriate or relevant.
- A local response will be provided where possible.
- Statewide or multi-area services may assist where a local response cannot be provided, or may add to a HEF allocation within available resources where a top up is required to provide an appropriate response.

5. CV BROKERAGE GUIDELINES

The Corrections Victoria Brokerage Program (CVBP) provides exiting prisoners with 'one-off' assistance to establish stable housing. Aiming to enhance each individual's capacity to access the private rental market and build confidence and skills in this area. Brokerage cannot be used for crisis accommodation, offenders supported by ReConnect or remandees and bail addresses (with exception to costs to sustain an existing private rental as outlined below).

CVBP can assist with:

- Private rental in advance.
- Private rental subsidy.
- Rental costs while Corrections Victoria undertakes a suitability tests and/or matching of individual tenants to specific properties.
- Costs associated with sustaining a private rental tenancy where the tenant has a short return to custody and sustaining the tenancy will avoid the tenant being released into homelessness (Max assistance available is 4 weeks rent).
- Temporary Absence where the person is incarcerated and is unable to afford the rebated rent.
- Storage costs and removal expenses (Max \$500- one application only).
- Essential furniture i.e. mattresses.
- Lock changes.
- Initial connection fees for essential utility services.

