

Probation and Parole Requirements

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), about 4.8 million people in the U.S. are on probation or parole.

Probation is a court-ordered period of supervision in the community, generally used as an alternative to jail or prison. Parole is a period of community supervision after someone is released from prison. Although not all released prisoners are put on parole, a large majority are. The average time spent on parole is 19 months.

All convicted offenders must comply with the court-ordered special conditions of their probation or parole. These rules may include:

- Reporting in person to probation or parole offices
- Participating in intensive supervision programs
- Not leaving the designated city/state without permission
- Finding and maintaining regular employment
- Not changing residence or employment without permission
- Not using drugs or alcohol; not entering drinking establishments
- Not possessing firearms or other dangerous weapons
- Not associating with persons who have criminal records
- Submitting to urinalysis or blood testing when instructed
- Paying supervision fees
- Obeying all state and local laws

The offender's specific terms of probation or parole are provided in writing at their first visit with their probation or parole officer. Other conditions of probation and parole may include:

- Conforming to electronic monitoring and special curfews
- Participating in transitional housing programs
- Paying restitution to victims in a timely manner
- Attending anger management courses
- Following court-ordered alcohol and drug counseling
- Following court-ordered mental health counseling and treatment
- Staying away from the victim(s) of their crime(s), particularly in cases that involved domestic violence, stalking, harassment, or assault
- Registering as a sex offender; obeying all restrictions for sex offenders

Reentry ministry volunteers should encourage probationers and parolees to adhere to the terms of their community supervision and attend all required meetings. Most states post their standard requirements for probation and parole on the Internet.

If you are assisting an ex-prisoner with reentry, it is important to understand what type of community supervision he or she has been assigned and all the rules that apply.