

GETTING STARTED SUPPORT

What you need to survive in prison is different to what you need on the outside. Many ex-prisoners have said that the first few weeks out were harder than their time inside.

Coping with money problems, dealing with other people and feeling like you don't belong in society can take a toll. You may feel lonely, depressed or anxious. If you are feeling like this, it's time to seek support.

Support can range from someone just listening to formal counselling. It also includes practical assistance to get what you need or help you with planning and budgeting.

Who Can Help

Family and friends can be a great form of support. But they may be part of the problem or unable to assist. There are many services that you can go to for professional assistance. Types of support that may be offered include:

- Social workers or support workers
- Counsellors, psychologists and relationship therapists
- Support groups
- Telephone counselling and information

Sometimes just having someone to listen can make you feel better. It can help you feel less stressed and you will be able to make better decisions.

Finding the right person to talk to is important. You may need to try a few services before you find what's right for you.

How can I find support?

To find a support service, ask your doctor, your community health service or other local services.

Telephone Helplines provide counselling and advice. They are a good way to get information about services in your area. You can also look up services in the white pages or on the internet.

If you have a support worker, you could ask them. Otherwise you can call support services (see other side of this sheet). If people can't help you, they will usually be able to put you in touch with someone who can.

TYPES OF SUPPORT

Social workers and support workers

Some services will allocate a social worker or a support worker to assist you with practical, social or emotional needs. They will be able to help you to access the services you need.

Some government agencies, such as Centrelink, have social workers that you can ask to speak to.

Counselling

Counselling is a chance for you to talk to someone in a safe space. It helps you identify your problems and find solutions. Counsellors are non-judgemental and keep the information you give them confidential. They will have experience talking to people with similar issues.

Support Groups

Support groups are for people who face the same issues to meet and help each other. There are support groups for many different issues, such as alcohol or drug use, depression and bereavement. If you are referred to counselling by a GP you will be eligible for up to 18 sessions.

Helplines

Telephone Helplines can provide counselling, advice or information over the phone. Some will also be able to refer you to local services.

They can support you through a crisis or give advice about ongoing issues.

They are usually free or cheap to call and don't charge for their services. You don't have to give your name or address.

Support C

Key Crisis & Counselling Helplines

DirectLine 1800 888 236

24 hour alcohol and drug counselling, information and referrals.

Family Relationships Advice Line 1800 050 321

Information and advice to anyone affected by family relationship difficulties or separation.

Gamblers' Helpline 1800 858 858

Help for people with gambling problems.

Lifeline 13 11 14

24 hour general counselling service. Anyone can call, it doesn't matter how big or small the problem might seem.

Medicines Line 1300 633 424

Information about prescribed, over-the-counter and alternative medicines.

MensLine 1300 78 99 78

Information for men who are thinking about their anger, behaviour, relationships issues or parenting and need help or support.

Men's Referral Service 1800 065 973

Support for men with anger issues. Also provides advice for families.

Parent Line 13 22 89

Counselling and advice for parents.

SANE Helpline 1800 187 263

Information and advice about mental illness.

Suicideline 1300 651 251

24 hour support to people who are thinking about suicide, or people who have been affected by suicide. Can refer to other services.

WIRE 1300 134 130

Support, advocacy and information for women.

Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service (03) 9322 3555 or 1800 015 188

24 hour crisis support and safe accommodation (refuges) for women and their children.

Support Services

There are agencies that specialise in work with people who have left prison. Most of their programs are by referral.

ACSO (Australian Community Support Organisation) (03) 9413 7000

ACSO provide ex-prisoners with a range of services, including counselling and referral.

The Brosnan Centre (03) 9387 1233

The Brosnan Centre provides support for offenders under the age of 23. It also offers support for Vietnamese offenders.

The Bridge Foundation (03) 5144 7777

The Bridge Foundation provides assistance for ex-prisoners in the Gippsland area to reintegrate into the community. (They do not provide housing).

The Prison Fellowship (03) 9469 4661

The Prison Fellowship can visit prisoners, and provide rehabilitation programs. They work with the children and families of prisoners and hold regular sporting matches with prisoners.

VACRO (03) 9605 1900

VACRO offers information and support to offenders and their families.

Telephone Interpreter 13 14 50

If you don't speak English or find it difficult you may want to use an interpreter. Fees are generally charged to the service provider.