

Sept. 7, 2007

To: Eddy McClure, staff attorney
Legal Services Division

From: Bob Anez, communications director
Department of Corrections

Jim Mason, American Indian liaison for the Department of Corrections, forwarded me your email concerning questions stemming from an assertion that inmates leave prison without any form of state-issued identification. That is not the case.

Montana State Prison (MSP) is the "gateway" for all male offenders entering the Montana prison system. When an inmate comes to MSP, an admissions officer issues every inmate an ID card that has the following information: name, adult offender number, current photograph, date of birth, height, weight, hair color and eye color. Inmates and staff use these ID cards to track an offender's movement within the prison system.

At the same time, prison officials create an inmate "exit ID card" for each inmate. It is labeled "Montana Department of Corrections Identification Card" and contains an inmate's name, offender number, date of issue, prison address and photograph, date of birth, height, weight, hair and eye color and gender. Its format is very much like a driver's license. This card is given to each inmate upon his release from the state prison, the private prison in Shelby or the regional prisons in Great Falls and Glendive.

The Department of Justice issues state of Montana identification cards through its driver licensing offices. A person must have proof of identity and residency, and pay an \$8 fee. That department's policy states that a prison inmate identification card will suffice as proof of identity.

At the Montana Women's Prison in Billings, inmates are issued an ID card upon admission, but the card does not accompany an inmate when she leaves. MWP encourages all female inmates to request assistance in obtaining identification. Case managers will obtain birth certificates and Social Security cards for inmates who fill out the necessary paperwork.

Prison staffers also escort inmates across the street to help them obtain a state identification card from the driver licensing office.

In general, staff at both facilities assists offenders nearing discharge in getting their driver's license, Social Security card and any other available form of identification. We make every attempt to help inmates make the best transition possible to the community because we believe that having a valid ID for employment purposes help inmates achieve a successful transition.

We are discussing with the Department of Justice possible alternative procedures that would allow Montana State Prison to issue a state ID card, rather than corrections ID card, to inmates as they are released.

Please let me know if you need any additional information.

cc: Bob Anez
Patricia Murdo
Leonard Mihelich
Annamae Siegfried-Derrick