

Coming Home, Homeless: Preventing Homelessness and Housing Instability for People in Reentry

Cross-System Collaboration and Action Steps



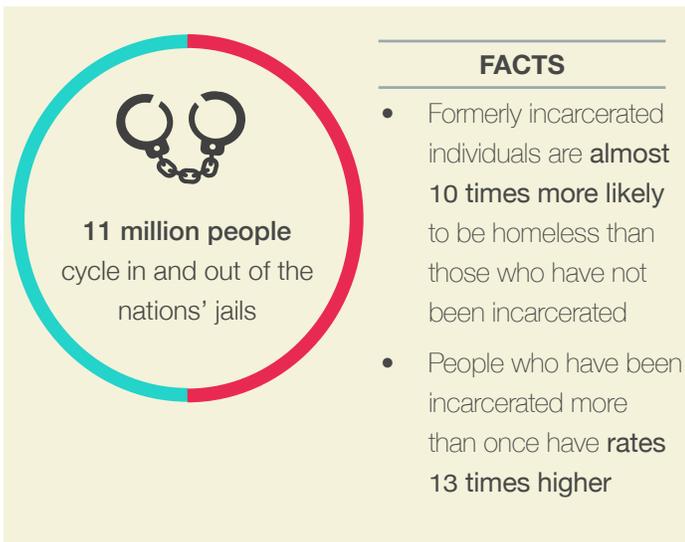
Homebase

ADVANCING SOLUTIONS TO HOMELESSNESS

HOUSING AFTER INCARCERATION

Each year, more than 600,000 people return to our communities from prison and 11 million people cycle in and out of the nation's jails. Formerly incarcerated individuals are almost 10 times more likely to be homeless than those who have not been incarcerated, and people who have been incarcerated more than once are 13 times more likely to experience homelessness.¹

Safe and stable housing is the foundation of successful community reentry from custody, but securing housing is perhaps the most immediate challenge facing formerly incarcerated persons upon their release.² Even after the initial reentry period, collateral consequences of conviction and incarceration persist and lead to disproportionate housing instability and homelessness rates amongst formerly incarcerated persons.³



CHALLENGES

This challenge does not equally impact all persons. Complex, systemic racism has led to the overrepresentation of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) in both the reentry and homeless populations. Based on Census

data, Black people are incarcerated 5 times more often than White people, and people identified as “Hispanic” are nearly twice as likely to be incarcerated as white people.⁴ BIPOC are similarly disproportionately represented in the homelessness population;

Black people, for example, account for 40% of the country's known homeless population but only 13% of the total population.⁵

We also know that people experiencing homelessness, incarcerated individuals, and BIPOC are uniquely vulnerable to serious consequences of COVID-19.⁶ As such, there has never been a more important time to prevent homelessness and housing instability for people who are in reentry or formerly incarcerated.

CROSS SYSTEM PARTNERSHIPS

Criminal legal system partners and homelessness systems of care — along with impacted persons, advocates, public health partners, foster care agencies, and other relevant stakeholders — must work together to address the housing needs of people impacted by incarceration.

Cross-system education and information gathering will form the foundation for better coordination and outcomes. We hope that the following information will help housing and criminal legal system stakeholders forge new partnerships, leverage resources, and collaboratively develop policies to better meet the ongoing housing needs of people impacted by the criminal legal system.



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Taking Action to Support Housing Stability for People Impacted by the Criminal Legal System

Cross-systems action and collaboration is needed in order to effectively prevent and end homelessness for persons with criminal legal system involvement. The following chart provides action steps for stakeholders and advocates in the homeless response, housing, and criminal legal systems to take now to support stable housing for persons coming out of carceral settings.

ACTION AREA	CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE HOMELESS RESPONSE AND HOUSING SYSTEMS	CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM
<p>Cross-Systems Knowledge Building</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage cross-system stakeholders to foster understanding of unfamiliar overlapping systems and increase fluency in partner-system languages as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide cross-system educational opportunities and materials ○ Seek out opportunities for dialogue and cross-system information exchange through convenings, trainings, and meetings ○ Attend and present on intersectional issues at conferences attended by cross-sector partners • Include impacted persons in systems education efforts and compensate them for their time. 	
<p>Cross-System Coordination</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify those who have been or are currently engaged with both the homeless response and criminal legal systems. • Establish and/or access a cross-systems partners workgroup focused on pre-release housing planning for clients identified as at-risk of becoming homeless. See, e.g., the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. • Invite representatives from the local criminal legal system and reentry partners to participate in regular Continuum of Care (CoC) meetings. • Invite representatives from local homelessness systems of care to participate in Community Corrections Partnership meetings and/or activities. • Include impacted persons in cross-systems coordination efforts and compensate them for their time. • Improve discharge planning efforts by coordinating system and individual-level release of information between custody, community supervision entities, and homelessness system providers to maximize resources and long-term stability. For more guidance, see Initial Considerations for Custodial Discharge Planning. 	

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<p data-bbox="117 220 382 318">Identification of Persons in Need of Assistance</p> 	<ul data-bbox="411 220 1184 886" style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct “in-reach” with local correctional facilities to help identify persons at-risk of homelessness upon release. • Utilize peer-based models for “in-reach” efforts. • Conduct “pop-up” or mobile homeless outreach and assessment efforts in partnership with reentry services. • Provide homelessness outreach workers cultural-responsiveness training to address the needs of system-impacted individuals. • Include and compensate the participation of impacted persons participating in in-reach and cultural responsiveness efforts. • Support criminal legal system partner efforts to develop processes to identify people at risk of homelessness upon reentry. 	<ul data-bbox="1205 220 1974 667" style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a standardized system-wide process to identify individuals at or close to intake who are entering the criminal legal system from an unstable housing situation (e.g., street, encampment, homeless shelter, evicted or displaced due to court orders) for targeted housing focus during reentry. • Work with homeless systems of care and behavioral health partners to ensure that housing need screening occurs, asks the right questions, and is trauma-informed. • Ensure that community supervision partners connect with housing partners early on in the housing planning process.

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<p>Reentry Planning</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate local criminal legal system partners on local homeless and housing resources to support reentry planning efforts. • Develop a Housing Plan template that can be used within correctional facilities to support housing planning and homelessness diversion efforts. • Audit, evaluate, and strengthen current services (e.g., in-reach) for reentry population in various custodial settings (jails, nearby prisons, ICE detention). • Collaborate across systems on individualized reentry plans that adopt national best practices. • Support and coordinate with criminal legal system partners around post-release transportation and “warm handoffs.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess and modify parole and/or probation conditions and residency requirements that may impact housing, so that any barriers to housing are as narrowly tailored as possible. • Create or revise policies that promote safe transitions from custody for medically vulnerable and/or those returning to homelessness (e.g., a standard release time not later than 3 p.m.; transportation services and/or direct releases to reentry service providers; accurate and timely release information to enable “warm handoffs” from custody). • Collaborate across systems on individualized reentry plans that adopt national best practices. • Provide COVID-19-responsive additional services prior to and at time of release (e.g., smart phone or tablets, internet, computer tutorials, medication and supplemental nutrition supplies, health care services appointments).
<p>Coordinated Entry</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider using a locally developed tool (or tailoring a more broadly available tool) to assess housing vulnerability of persons discharging from the criminal legal system. • Consider including persons with criminal legal system involvement as a prioritized population for access to housing and services within Coordinated Entry. • Ensure that Coordinated Entry access points do not prematurely screen out people coming from jail or prison on the assumption that they are not eligible for housing programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build knowledge and staff expertise on how to connect persons who are being discharged from correctional facilities into stable housing situations with Coordinated Entry access points. • Work with homelessness systems of care to assess resource and information-sharing opportunities.

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<p data-bbox="107 217 390 282">Shelter and Housing Options</p> 	<ul data-bbox="411 217 1182 1187" style="list-style-type: none"> • Set aside units and subsidies for people impacted by the criminal legal system in housing programs, particularly for low-barrier transitional housing and supportive housing. • Provide a range of options for persons with criminal legal system involvement that are low barrier with robust supportive services, in alignment with the Housing First model. • Pursue innovative shelter and housing options that provide a less institutional setting (e.g., non-congregate shelter) for persons who have recently been discharged from the criminal legal system. • Educate and partner with landlords to encourage them to end policies that screen system-impacted people out for housing opportunities. • Develop tools and trainings for line staff at homeless services programs to ensure they understand the barriers and trauma affecting many people impacted by the criminal legal system, as well as resources available to them. • Work with Public Housing Authorities to ensure that prior criminal convictions do not impede access to public housing or other housing assistance. 	<ul data-bbox="1207 217 1978 894" style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify local, state, and private initiatives and resources (e.g., CA AB 109) that provide housing specifically to persons with histories of criminal legal system involvement beyond federally funded homeless response resources. • Maximize options by including homelessness systems in conversations and planning around release protocols and reentry. • Partner with housing and homeless services providers to educate custodial staff about community housing and shelter resources, and how people exiting custody can best access them. • Provide opportunities for internal education on Housing First and seek external support and technical assistance for troubleshooting around potential challenges with Housing First for reentry populations.

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<p data-bbox="170 219 327 284">Supportive Services</p> 	<ul data-bbox="409 219 1182 795" style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that, regardless of type of shelter or housing placement, the following services are accessible to clients impacted by the criminal legal system, as needed: employment, education, skills for life on the outside, transportation, mental health, and substance use treatment services. • In line with Housing First principles, make engaging in services voluntary rather than a condition of obtaining or maintaining housing. • Learn about and form relationships with targeted service providers offering programs for formerly incarcerated clients, such as record expungement programs and support groups for people in reentry. 	<ul data-bbox="1203 219 1980 649" style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide referrals to the following services as part of reentry planning for persons being discharged from correctional facilities: employment, education, skills for life on the outside, transportation, mental health, and substance use treatment services. • Consider the housing ramifications of any court or supervisory requirements or conditions placed on someone impacted by the criminal legal system. Ensure that any such restrictions are as narrowly tailored and individualized as possible to eliminate impacts on housing access.

REFERENCES

- ¹ National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Formerly Incarcerated People are More Than 10 Times More Likely to be Homeless* (2018), available at: <https://nlihc.org/resource/formerly-incarcerated-people-are-nearly-10-times-more-likely-be-homeless>.
- ² The Urban Institute, *Understanding The Challenges of Prisoner Reentry: Research Findings from the Urban Institute's Prisoner Reentry Portfolio* (2006), available at: <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/42981/411289-Understanding-the-Challenges-of-Prisoner-Reentry.PDF>.
- ³ The Prison Policy Initiative, *Nowhere to Go: Homelessness among formerly incarcerated people* (2018), available at <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html>.
- ⁴ The Prison Policy Initiative, *Breaking Down Mass Incarceration in the 2010 Census: State-by-State Incarceration Rates by Race/Ethnicity* (2014), available at <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/rates.html>.
- ⁵ National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Racial Inequalities in Homelessness, by the Numbers* (2020), available at <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/racial-inequalities-homelessness-numbers/>.
- ⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Interim Guidance on People Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness*, 2020, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/unsheltered-homelessness.html>.
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