

Cross-System Action Labs

Improving Housing Access for People Impacted by the Criminal Legal System

Summary and Goals for the Action Labs

The Criminal Legal System Initiative hosted a cross-system Action Lab to deepen partnerships between local Continuums of Care (CoC) and criminal legal system entities to address homelessness and housing instability among system-impacted people. Over the course of two working sessions in August 2022, criminal legal system and CoC partners from three California counties (Contra Costa, El Dorado and Marin) came together to identify opportunities for deepening coordination and achieving mutual goals.

Key Takeaways

CoC and criminal legal system partners, representing a diverse range of rural, suburban, and urban communities, identified key challenges in meeting the housing needs of people with criminal legal system histories, and learned about effective strategies from other jurisdictions.

Key takeaways included:

- Assessment and triage tools for people experiencing homelessness may unintentionally filter out high-need individuals with criminal legal system backgrounds. In response, one community is developing supplemental assessment tools to address histories of trauma and medical interventions.
- Structural barriers to collaboration between the homelessness response and criminal legal systems result in homeless service providers and reentry service providers working in silos without a solid understanding of how the other system functions. Communities asked for designated opportunities for multidisciplinary partners to share knowledge. This space is crucial for intentional and creative engagement that can't typically be achieved while maintaining urgent work responsibilities.
- Building relationships among cross-system partners creates opportunities for leveraging funding to support housing for people exiting carceral settings. For example, some communities use Public Safety Realignment funding, also known as AB 109 funds, to provide housing and supportive services to people reentering their communities from jails and prisons.

Next Steps

The Action Lab process will continue in 2023, with a deeper dive into housing, service, and resource allocation for people living at the intersection of the homelessness system of care and the criminal legal system.

If your community would be interested in participating in future Cross-System Action Labs, email us at clsi@homebaseccc.org.