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Coming Home

An Evaluation of the New York City
Housing Authority's Family Reentry Pilot Program

John Bae, Margaret diZerega, Jacob Kang-Brown, Ryan Shanahan, and Ram Subramanian

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From the Director

Having a place to call home is a fundamental human need and a human right under international law. It is particularly urgent for people who are getting ready to leave jail, prison, or a juvenile correctional facility. People leaving a corrections environment must have a place to live as a condition of release in many instances and—while too many people move from prison to shelter—the notion of home holds a lot of emotional weight. It is where people can reconnect with their children, or make amends to their parents. Home can be the stable center of a journey toward school or a new job.

This report on the Family Reentry Pilot Program (FRPP)—a groundbreaking effort by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)—describes a new approach for public housing authorities to support the return to the community of people who were incarcerated. The Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) has been fortunate to serve as one of NYCHA's partners in planning, implementing, and evaluating the program. Vera continues to work with NYCHA as the agency considers expanding the program after the pilot phase.

While other housing authorities have implemented programs similar to the FRPP, NYCHA's size makes

this pilot particularly noteworthy. NYCHA is North America's largest public housing authority, and its FRPP pilot has helped to highlight New York City's urgent need for access to affordable housing, particularly for vulnerable populations including formerly incarcerated people. By demonstrating how a housing authority can use its discretion in setting many of its policies, NYCHA is serving as an example for other jurisdictions eager to think differently about families separated by incarceration and the importance of stable housing in promoting successful reentry.

A critical piece of the pilot's promise arises from NYCHA's partnerships with city and state corrections agencies, the New York City Department of Homeless Services, intermediaries including Vera and the Corporation for Supportive Housing, and the 13 nonprofit reentry service providers that helped shape the program. By drawing on the strengths and knowledge of each partner, NYCHA has created a model program that can be expanded to serve more families. This report serves to document the program and can be used as a template for other housing authorities interested in applying a similar approach.



Fred Patrick
Director, Center on Sentencing and Corrections
Vera Institute of Justice

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Introduction

“[The NYCHA Family Reentry Pilot Program] has provided a sense of belonging. I’m not having to live in fear. I am really back home and comfortable.”

—Program participant describing what it means to be home

For people returning to their communities from jail or prison, housing is not just shelter; it provides a critical foundation for success. Stable housing and family support prevent homelessness, which often increases the likelihood that people will wind up back behind bars (known as recidivism). Having a secure place to live also helps reduce drug use—another known risk factor for recidivism—and is an important factor in getting and keeping a job.¹ For these reasons, safe and stable housing is essential for the approximately 636,000 people released from state or federal prisons and the approximately 11 million cycling through jails annually across the nation.²

Often, people leaving jail or prison intend to live with their families, either because of preference or they have no other place to go.³ However, if their families live in public housing, this may not be possible because public housing authorities (PHAs) may temporarily or permanently bar people with criminal histories, including people convicted of misdemeanor crimes and with arrests. And these rules can be far-reaching. Although federal mandates only prohibit people who are on lifetime sex offense registries or have convictions for producing methamphetamines in federally subsidized housing, local PHAs have broad discretion to widen the net of excluded people to include those with criminal histories beyond these proscribed categories.⁴ For example, the Newark Housing Authority in New Jersey imposes 99-year bans for certain violent convictions.⁵ Other PHAs look not only at criminal convictions in assessing admissibility; counter to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines, they may also consider an arrest on a person’s record to deny admission.⁶ For example, in various jurisdictions within California, Connecticut, Georgia, Maine, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina, PHAs define criminal activity as an arrest within the past five years.⁷ As a result of these rules, formerly incarcerated people who wish to be reunited with their families in public housing and have no other housing options often have a difficult choice to make: ask their families to move, which is often an unrealistic request; return home in violation of most public housing authorities’ regulations and put their families at risk of eviction; seek alternate housing in the few under-resourced shelters or halfway homes that have open beds; or live on the streets.

The housing dilemma

Rising public concern about crime and public disorder during the last quarter of the twentieth century fueled a punitive turn in criminal justice policy. Besides enacting harsh new sentencing laws including mandatory minimum sentences and truth-in-sentencing policies that limit early release, policymakers also sought to widen the reach of these sanctions. They did this by expanding the number and scope of post-incarceration restrictions to exclude people with criminal histories from many aspects of mainstream life, including temporary or permanent ineligibility for life-sustaining social benefits such as public housing.^a In particular, a series of federal laws addressed the growing concern about violent crime, as well as the role of drugs in violent crime in public housing communities. These included:

- > the Anti-Drug Abuse Act (1988), which authorized the HUD Secretary to grant local PHAs funds for initiatives to eliminate drug crimes;
- > the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act (1990), which allowed PHAs to use criminal records for admissions determinations;
- > the Housing Opportunity Program Extension Act (1996), which mandated federal and state law enforcement agencies to comply with PHA criminal background requests;
- > the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act (1998), which expanded the discretion of PHAs in determining admissions eligibility and established a permanent ban for lifetime sex offender registrants; and
- > the Independent Agencies Appropriations Act (1999), which barred households with any member who was convicted of producing methamphetamines in public housing.^b

As access to public housing for people with criminal histories became increasingly limited in the 1980s, they had to look elsewhere to live. But the lack of affordable housing in the private market, the scarce supply and regulations restricting tenancy in subsidized housing, the lack of transitional housing including service-enriched supportive housing, and the shortage of bed space and often dangerous conditions at halfway houses have made this search extremely challenging.^c An array of informal barriers rooted in the stigma of having a criminal record or being formerly incarcerated, and factors such as having poor credit or lacking the proper identification documentation further reduce the likelihood that this population will find stable housing.^d Those who would like to return to their families may not be welcome because family members may view them as negative influences or an additional financial burden to the household.^e

Faced with a persistently high reincarceration rate among formerly incarcerated people, federal policymakers and those in some localities around the country have begun rethinking these policies. This shift is informed by a growing body of research on the correlation between unstable housing or homelessness and future criminal activity, which finds that housing stability and family reunification are factors in reducing the risk of reoffending, promoting successful reentry, and encouraging physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.⁸ Some of this research, for example, shows that stable housing is often critical in securing employment—an important factor associated with lower rates of future criminal activity.⁹ And for nearly 80 percent of men and 90 percent of women with chronic health conditions who are returning home from prison, stable housing is critical in accessing and receiving treatment.¹⁰ Coming home from prison can lead to stress, anxiety, and depression, which family support can help overcome.¹¹ Resuming a familial role—as a parent, for example—can have positive

Current New York City Housing Authority policies

Following the federal mandate, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) places lifetime exclusions on people who are registered sex offenders or have been convicted of producing methamphetamines in public housing. It also has broad restrictions for anyone with a conviction history.^f The length of exclusion varies according to crime class. As indicated below, people with a felony conviction may be barred for five to six years after leaving jail or prison, while people with a misdemeanor may be banned for three to four years. NYCHA revised its admissions policies in 2013 to calculate the exclusion period starting when a person is released from incarceration; previously, the exclusion period began when a person completed his or her sentence, which may have included probation or parole supervision.

NYCHA exclusions by conviction type

Felonies - A, B, or C	Six years from the date a convicted person has served his or her sentence (not including parole or probation), and has no further convictions or pending charges.
Felonies - Class D or E	Five years from the date a convicted person has served his or her sentence (not including parole or probation), and has no further convictions or pending charges.
Misdemeanor - Class A	Four years from the date a convicted person has served his or her sentence (not including parole or probation), and has no further convictions or pending charges.
Misdemeanor - Class B or Unclassified	Three years from date a convicted person has served sentence (not including parole or probation), and has no further convictions or pending charges.

NYCHA also revised its criminal background check policy: It now conducts these checks only when a person's application comes to the top of the waiting list rather than at the time of application. Despite these policies, some people return to NYCHA housing against the rules because they have nowhere else to go, need material assistance and emotional support from their families, or simply because they wish to reside with their families.⁹ Such living arrangements that are unauthorized by NYCHA are unstable for the returning person and expose the entire family to the risk of eviction.

effects on a person's reentry to society, including increasing the likelihood of securing employment and reducing rates of recidivism and substance use.¹²

"Without housing stability...everything else starts to crumble: mental health, child rearing, etc. The fear of homelessness is such a stressful thing. I have been in case management positions where we are required to support all needs, [and] housing was usually the most pressing need... it is at the top of the list of important things."

—Reentry service provider on the importance of housing

The weight of these findings has spurred various jurisdictions to consider and enact reforms and innovative practices to ease restrictions on public housing for those with a criminal record. At the national level, HUD issued a policy statement in 2011 urging all public housing authorities to take steps to increase access to public and federally subsidized housing.¹³ Shaun Donovan,

FRPP design

Initial FRPP eligibility

The FRPP is open to 150 formerly incarcerated people released from a prison, jail, or juvenile correctional facility within three years of their application who are seeking to reunite with their families (as defined in NYCHA policy) in NYCHA apartments.^a Those who are nearing their release date can apply while still incarcerated. Applicants must be at least 16 years old with convictions that fall outside the two statutory exclusions mandated by federal law. Applicants who are seeking to reunite with family members who live in a building for seniors must meet the age requirement of 62. If applicants meet these initial eligibility criteria and are interested in applying for the FRPP, their application is submitted to NYCHA for further screening.

The pilot is based on NYCHA's pre-existing temporary permission to join a household policy, which allows a tenant to ask permission from the property manager for any family member (regardless of their criminal history) to live in his or her apartment for up to one year.^b Under temporary permission status (TP), the income of the person granted TP is not considered for the purpose of rental calculation. TP was extended to two years to fit into the pilot design. If accepted, both the leaseholder and the pilot participant must sign agreements stating that a participant expelled from the program must vacate the family's NYCHA apartment within 30 days. A participant's further criminal justice system involvement does not jeopardize the household's tenancy.

For the purposes of the FRPP, NYCHA changed standard housing eligibility requirements to include people who were previously ineligible because they were permanently excluded.^c Starting in December 2014, NYCHA gave a two-year suspension to participants who were permanently excluded from public housing because of the nature of their previous convictions or behavior but were otherwise eligible for the pilot program. Upon successful completion of the program, participants' families can apply to have the exclusion lifted and can then apply to add their loved one to their lease. Notably, the NYCHA Screening Committee reached out to all applicants who had permanent exclusions and had applied prior to Fall 2014 to assess whether they were still interested in the pilot. For those who remained interested, NYCHA reevaluated their applications and several were accepted.

Referrals

The 13 service providers listed below refer potential FRPP participants to NYCHA. These community-based organizations, which work with formerly incarcerated people, offer the range of services pilot participants typically need, including mental health services, substance-use treatment, family counseling, and job training. In turn, partnering agencies including the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), the New York City Department of Correction (DOC), the New York Office of Children and Family Services, and the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) connect clients to the participating providers.

- > Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES)
- > Center for Community Alternatives (CCA)
- > ComALERT at the Kings County District Attorney's Office
- > Exodus Transitional Community
- > Fortune Society
- > Friends of Island Academy
- > Getting Out and Staying Out
- > Harlem Community Justice Center
- > Housing Works, Inc.
- > Osborne Association
- > Services for the Underserved (SUS)
- > STRIVE International
- > Women's Prison Association

Application and screening process

In the application, partnering agencies assess applicants to determine whether applicants can succeed in the FRPP. Indicators of potential success included attendance at or completion of a job training program, a treatment program, or an internship; employment; or a good disciplinary record while incarcerated.

A screening committee made up of representatives from NYCHA's Family Services Department, Applications and Tenancy Administration Department, and Property Management reviews all applications. The committee reviews application packets that include the reentry provider's assessment of the applicant and family and a criminal background report provided by NYCHA's Law Department. It weighs factors including:

- > the victim(s) of the crime and whether the victim(s) live in the same development as the applicant’s prospective housing;
- > where the crimes occurred;
- > whether tenants are in good standing (which includes a review of the family’s rent payment record);
- > if the family is not in good standing, whether NYCHA would consider helping to solve the problem (for example, by helping families resolve or lower the amount of overdue rent); and
- > whether the family is under an order to terminate its tenancy, or has a pending eviction case in the housing division of civil court.

In some cases, a person and his or her family may be a good fit for the FRPP, but the placement could violate other NYCHA occupancy rules on age and crowding. In such instances, NYCHA finds a solution so that the participant may move back home. For instance, if a person moving into the home will make it overcrowded under HUD’s occupancy standards, the family will be allowed to live there for two years, unless the additional person would make the home “extremely overcrowded.”^d At the end of two years, if the participant completes the FRPP and remains a member of the household, NYCHA will arrange for the family to move into an appropriately sized public housing unit.

If an application progresses past the initial screening, NYCHA staff meets with the applicant and with the family in its apartment to assess the living environment. Screening of prerelease applicants takes place at the correctional facility.

Once NYCHA makes a determination, it e-mails a letter of acceptance or rejection to the referring agency.

Program requirements, action plan, and completion

Those accepted into the pilot sign a contract stipulating the FRPP requirements, and then move into their family’s unit. A family accepted into the FRPP signs a two-year temporary permission form, which allows the participant to live in the unit. Upon acceptance, participants develop an action plan with their case manager at the referring agency that outlines goals for the next six months and steps to achieving them. The action plan may be refined over time as the participant’s circumstances change, and the case manager and participant revisit it on an ongoing basis.

Action plans may include the following program requirements, in addition to participants’ individual and family goals:

- > Within six months of entry into the pilot and as determined by the participant and case manager, the participants must be engaged in a job or job-training, in school, or in a treatment program.
- > Participants are expected to participate in other activities that were agreed upon with their case manager (such as job-training workshops or substance-use counseling).
- > Participants must meet the terms of their parole or probation, including meetings with their probation or parole officer. The case managers will check in with the probation and parole officers to ensure participants are in compliance.

Participants risk disqualification if they violate the terms of their action plan. In addition, termination from the pilot will result if the participant:

- > is convicted of any felony or misdemeanor;
- > is incarcerated while in the program based on a violation of the terms of parole or probation;
- > fails to meet any of the other FRPP requirements; or
- > commits any other act which, in NYCHA’s judgment, warrants termination from the program.^e

However, if a participant is arrested during his or her participation in the program and acquitted of all charges, the period from arrest to acquittal will count toward their program participation.

After completion of the pilot program, the family member who is the primary leaseholder, or the head of the household, can request that the FRPP participant be added to the household on a permanent basis. NYCHA will perform a criminal background check to verify that the participant has not been convicted of any offense while in the program. In determining whether to grant permanent permission, NYCHA will not consider crimes committed before the participant enrolled in FRPP. Once NYCHA grants permanent residency permission, the agency will include the newly added person’s earnings in the household income calculation and the family’s rent will be adjusted accordingly.

then-HUD Secretary, wrote to public housing authorities, saying, “People who have paid their debt to society deserve the opportunity to become productive citizens and caring parents, to set the past aside and embrace the future [and] part of that support means helping ex-offenders gain access to one of the most fundamental building blocks of a stable life—a place to live.”¹⁴

HUD released a second set of guidelines in 2015 urging PHAs to eliminate consideration of prior arrests when making admissions decisions.¹⁵ In response, the Housing Authority of New Orleans reworked its screening processes so that criminal history is no longer used as an automatic bar to prospective applicants. Others have removed questions about criminal history from housing applications. Still other housing authorities have taken more incremental steps. For example, Baltimore, Cleveland, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Oakland have begun programs to help people with criminal histories apply or return to public housing and receive reentry case-management services.¹⁶

One such program is the Family Reentry Pilot Program (FRPP) in New York City, launched in November 2013. The Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) along with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS), the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), the New York City Department of Correction (DOC), and 13 reentry service providers joined forces to create the FRPP to address the barriers that formerly incarcerated people face in gaining access to public housing. (For a list of the reentry service providers, see “FRPP design,” p. 10.)

The pilot was designed to reunite 150 formerly incarcerated people with their families who live in public housing and test a simple theory: Providing formerly incarcerated people with a safe and stable living environment can improve their quality of life and reduce their risk of future justice-system involvement while improving public safety. To help pilot participants achieve this goal, they each received personally tailored case management and supportive services offered by reentry service providers who helped them address critical needs, including getting work, continuing their education, participating in substance-use counseling, and securing public benefits. If pilot participants complete the two-year program, remain free of any justice-system involvement within those two years, and their family continues to comply with its lease obligations, they can be added on to the lease.

Overview of the study

Beginning in 2014, Vera conducted a study to evaluate preliminary effects of the FRPP using information gained from interviews with participants, families, and service providers. Vera also estimated the need for the FRPP based on an analysis of state administrative data on people returning to the community from prison and city administrative data on people released from jail who had contact with the homeless shelter system. These activities were conducted to:

- > assess the FRPP's effect on the participants' lives, reentry experiences, and family reunification;
- > examine the design and implementation of the pilot; and
- > estimate the number of people with justice-system involvement who would be eligible for the FRPP if the pilot were expanded.

Vera found the FRPP succeeded in helping pilot participants meet their reentry needs. A majority of participants were able to get work, attend job training, go to school, and/or receive substance-use treatment while living at home. Critically, only one person was convicted of a new offense. And as Vera's study and assessment of the FRPP demonstrates, this success was in part a result of the collaboration and combined efforts of NYCHA, the reentry service providers, corrections agencies, and implementation partners, ensuring that they addressed each participant's needs.

However, the pilot was also hampered in several ways that prevented it from reaching its capacity of 150 participants—85 participants were accepted at the time of this evaluation. Vera's research uncovered that a major obstacle to the FRPP enrollment was the widespread resident distrust of NYCHA generally, and skepticism around the pilot more specifically. In particular, some potential applicants and family members believed that NYCHA would never launch a full-scale program that helps people with criminal histories such as the FRPP, or that the program was a tactic aimed at identifying unauthorized residents and evicting families who were not complying with NYCHA rules and regulations.

Despite these shortcomings, the lessons learned from the FRPP—its components, successes, and challenges—can help NYCHA improve the

program as it considers expanding it (known as “taking it to scale”). As Vera’s analysis of New York City and State’s administrative data suggests, a scaled program has the potential to help many thousands of men and women released from New York State corrections custody or New York City jails. Indeed, NYCHA is considering expanding the pilot’s scope to allow more eligible people to participate. And already, the FRPP design has drawn the attention of other PHAs interested in establishing their own public housing-reentry program to create a sustainable path for formerly incarcerated people to reunite with their families.

The following report details the design of the FRPP, the findings from the evaluation, and lessons learned from its implementation. Given the program’s implications for successful reentry, family reunification, and public safety, the pilot’s lessons can guide public housing authorities looking to start their own reentry housing programs.

Methodology

The study was three-pronged. It assessed the effect of the pilot on the lives of participants, explored the strengths of the program components and implementation challenges, and estimated the potential for a larger program. The evaluation sought to answer the following research questions:

- > How has the FRPP affected participants’ lives?
- > What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program components?
- > What were the implementation challenges, if any?
- > What is the potential untapped market for the FRPP should NYCHA expand the program to accommodate all people who need it?

Because some Vera staff participated in developing and implementing the pilot, a separate team of Vera researchers evaluated the program. First, the researchers conducted a short-term participant-level outcome study that examined the program’s effect on the participants’ lives. Between January 2015 and February 2016, Vera conducted outreach to all 59 program participants enrolled at the time. Vera conducted in-person interviews with a subset of 29 program participants, using predetermined, open-ended questions. As

recruitment numbers increased, Vera considered extending the data collection period to interview additional participants. However, the researchers reached the point of data saturation—they received consistent responses and could not see any new findings emerging from subsequent interviews.¹⁷ The interviewees shared similar characteristics of those who could not be contacted or refused to participate (see Figure 1). The interviews focused on the level of satisfaction with the pilot program, participants’ family support, service needs, perceptions of the reentry process, and feedback on the recruitment and application processes and case management. Vera conducted a structured content analysis of the responses using NVivo analysis software and coded the responses to organize the analysis items by theme.

Figure 1

Characteristics of participants contacted for interviews (n=59)

	Participants interviewed (n=29)	Participants not interviewed (n=30)
Gender		
Female	2	4
Male	27	26
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	19	17
Hispanic	9	10
White non-Hispanic	0	2
Multiracial	0	1
No response	1	0
Age (at time of application)		
16–30	7	11
31–40	8	8
41+	14	11
Family members in returning household		
Parent(s)	22	25
Sibling	7	12
Significant others	4	3
Child/ren	3	4
Grandparents	1	-
Significant Others’ Child/ren	1	-

Vera researchers also interviewed 15 family members of participants between December 2015 and April 2016. While researchers contacted 29 family members listed in the applications of the interviewed participants, only 15 people agreed to be interviewed. Family member interviews focused on perceptions of the program and how it affected the family.

Vera also collected progress reports from the reentry service providers on a bi-monthly basis. Vera recorded the milestones and other relevant information found in the progress reports throughout the course of the pilot. (See Data sources, below.)

Second, the researchers conducted a process evaluation assessing the program's design and implementation with an eye toward its potential for program expansion throughout NYCHA and replicating it in other jurisdictions. To inform the process evaluation, researchers interviewed 11 staff of reentry service organizations between March and May 2016, focusing on strengths and weaknesses of the program components as well as barriers and challenges to the program's implementation. Interviewees included program directors and direct-service staff.

Finally, the researchers conducted the first-ever estimate of the previously incarcerated population affected by NYCHA's current admissions policies—people who could potentially benefit from an expansion of the FRPP. To arrive at this estimate, they analyzed data on people released from New York State prisons between 2010 and 2013. Researchers focused on people who would be eligible for the FRPP because they had a documented NYCHA release address, excluding all those barred by federal conviction restrictions. (For comparisons of demographic characteristics of the analyzed DOCCS releases and FRPP applicants, see Appendix A.) They also examined data from DHS to assess the number of people being released from jail and prison who were eligible for the FRPP who also had stayed in a homeless shelter.

Data sources

Interviews with participants, family members, and reentry service providers, along with progress reports from reentry service providers and administrative data from the following New York State and City agencies, were used for this study:

Interviews with participants, family members, and service providers:

Vera conducted in-person, semi-structured interviews with 29 participants, 15 family members of participants, and 11 reentry service providers.

Interviews with participants and family members explored the early effects of the FRPP on the lives of the participants and their family members. The interviews with the service providers explored the strengths and weaknesses of the program components, as well as any implementation challenges.

Reentry service organizations: On a bi-monthly basis, Vera collected progress reports from the FRPP reentry service providers. Progress reports documented the first six months of a participant's progress in the FRPP and included the frequency of contacts between the participants and their case manager, progress toward completing milestones in the participant's action plan (an agreement between participant and case manager outlining the participant's six-month goals, such as getting work and securing health insurance), and any contact with the criminal justice system.

New York State Department of Corrections and Community

Supervision (DOCCS): DOCCS provided data for all 93,874 people released from state facilities between January 2010 and December 2013. The data included demographic characteristics (such as gender, race, age), charge characteristics (specific charge types such as robbery or burglary), and an address where people reported they were going to live upon release.

New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS): DHS provided data on people who were released from a New York State prison or New York City jail between January 2010 and December 2013, had DHS shelter contact between January 2010 and March 2016, and who reported to DHS that they had lived in NYCHA at one point in their lives. The DHS shelter contact in this dataset was a person's most recent shelter stay—a person may have had more than one shelter stay upon release from prison or jail.

Study limitations

There were several limitations to the study. First, there were only 59 pilot participants out of a potential 150 at the time that Vera conducted the process evaluation—the result of difficulties recruiting eligible applicants for the FRPP. Although Vera researchers considered continuing the interviews once the program had admitted more people, the researchers had already begun to see recurring responses to their questions, known as “data saturation” (see Methodology, p. 14). Second, Vera successfully contacted 31 people but two refused and 28 were unreachable—one person was deported and 27 others did not have working phone numbers or were otherwise unavailable. However, given the small scope of the pilot program, the saturation of responses, and the similarities between interviewed and non-interviewed participants, the sample of interviews was sufficient to address the research questions and accomplish the objectives of the evaluation.

The analysis estimating the number of formerly incarcerated people affected by NYCHA admissions policies also had limitations. Specifically, some people leaving New York State prisons may report returning to a non-NYCHA address upon release, but may ultimately live in a NYCHA apartment with family members. Thus, because the data on people released from state prisons who plan on returning to NYCHA housing was self-reported, the number at the researchers’ disposal may be an underestimate of the entire population that could benefit from the FRPP program.

Findings

Vera organized its findings in four categories: initial outcomes of the FRPP; effects of the FRPP on participants and family members; strengths and weaknesses of the FRPP; and the unmet need for the FRPP.

Initial outcomes of the FRPP

Drawing on reports from service providers, Vera tracked the progress of FRPP participants. (See Figure 2 for characteristics of participants and comparisons to the NYCHA population.) The reports revealed promising initial outcomes.

Figure 2

FRPP participants and comparisons to NYCHA population¹⁸

	FRPP Participants (n=85)	NYCHA population (%) [*]
Gender		
Female	10	-
Male	75	-
Age (at time of application)		
18-24	8	-
25-29	15	-
30-34	15	-
35-39	10	-
40 +	37	-
Race/Ethnicity		
Black	52	46
Hispanic	28	44
White non-Hispanic	3	4
Other ¹⁹	2	6
Borough of residence		
Bronx	12	25.5
Brooklyn	29	33.8
Manhattan	35	28.6
Queens	8	9.5
Staten Island	1	2.6

^{*}Note: Data on genders of individual NYCHA residents were not available. Data on age ranges of NYCHA residents presented in this figure were not available.

Six people completed the two-year program, and of those, three have been added to their family's lease. The three other successful pilot participants opted to leave NYCHA and now have stable housing with their significant others. The six who completed the program were among the first participants accepted into the pilot; others are at various stages of program participation. (See Figure 3 for program participation status.)

Figure 3

Program participation status as of September 2016 (n=85)

Period	Number of participants
Within first six months of program participation	22
Within six-12 months of program participation	11
Within one-two years of program participation	46
Completed two-year program requirement	6

The remaining applicants were people who were not enrolled in the program for various reasons:

- > Thirty-five applications were closed or withdrawn, which meant that the applicants withdrew themselves from the application process or they did not meet one of the program eligibility requirements.
- > Twenty-two were denied for various reasons, including the NYCHA selection committee's judgment that applicants had not demonstrated significant changes in their lives after incarceration or in consideration of the victim of the crime who lived in the same development.
- > Six applications were deferred to be reviewed at a later date, because those applicants had not demonstrated sufficiently that they were intending to break earlier patterns of committing crime by enrolling in programs or pursuing employment goals.
- > Five applications were pending review. (For a breakdown of the status of all applications, see Appendix B.)

While four participants were arrested for new offenses and another four committed technical violations of their parole, only one participant has been convicted of a new charge while in the program. Of the 85 participants, Vera found through progress reports that 41 have found a job or maintained employment, 11 have attended employment training and workshops, 12 were receiving training toward certifications, 12 were attending school, and 15 were in substance-use treatment programs.²⁰ (For additional details on participants, including educational attainment, living status at the time of applications, and participants' household information, see Appendix C.)

The effects of the FRPP

To understand participants' and families' perceptions of the pilot's effects, Vera researchers interviewed 29 pilot participants and 15 family members (See Methodology p. 14). Interviewees viewed the transition from incarceration to the community as overwhelming, describing reentry as a time of managing crippling debt from past-due child support, homelessness, panic attacks on crowded trains, frustration with trying to find a job, and struggles against drug addiction. However, they reported that the FRPP helped counteract many of these barriers and obstacles in a number of ways and were extremely satisfied with the program. Tina, a mother living with her participant son, reported that the service providers partnering with NYCHA helped him to “overcome a lot of red tape.”²¹ She went on to say that it also gave him a “sure sense that he had support.” Jennifer, another mother, said that the FRPP helped to keep her son from being “lost in [the] system” and that she now gets to “see him every day.”

Nineteen interviewees responded with very positive or satisfied responses when asked how they felt about their current living arrangement. Jon, a participant in his thirties who reunited with his wife and children, responded that he was “happy to live with family without having to worry or live in fear.” Albert, a man in his late fifties who lives with his elderly mother, told researchers, “The pilot is a good program that came right in time when I didn't have a place to live.” Tamara, a woman in her early fifties who was living with her adult son, had a similar experience. She reported that FRPP “was the best thing that could have happened to me... Things could not have worked out better.” (See *Reconnecting parents and children*, p. 24.) Nydia, the sister of a participant,

stated, “It is an important factor to have family members involved” and that the FRPP was in steady contact “referring them to new opportunities. That makes a big difference.” Another family member, a 77-year-old woman, stated the program “offers a sense of support” and added that her son “helps with the rent, groceries, and with cleaning around the house in general.” She said that the FRPP “is a good way to put the family back together rather than separating [them].”

When interviewees were less enthusiastic about their current living situation, it was couched in broader aspirations of independence and living space, not as critiques of the pilot itself. For example, Jon’s enthusiasm for the pilot was tempered by the stigma he felt was associated with public housing. He wanted to get a private apartment and was not interested in passing the public housing lease down to his children. Timothy, a participant in his forties living with his mother, reported the desire for a larger apartment; he was sleeping on his mother’s couch, and a two-bedroom would allow him to have his own room and privacy. Tamara said, “It is comfortable but I wouldn’t mind my own place... it feels cramped sometimes.” And finally, some of the participants discussed wanting to eventually “get on their own feet” and gain independence. A common refrain from men living with their mothers was summed up by Lamar, a participant in his late twenties who learned about the pilot through a prison newsletter: “It is OK for now, but no grown man wants to live with his mother.”

Safe and stable housing

A common theme that emerged from the interviews was the importance of safe and stable housing. Nineteen participants mentioned safe and stable housing as essential to their post-incarceration life. Participants reported that being able to live in NYCHA housing with their family members was a safety net against precarious living arrangements and the possibility of homelessness. The significance of the stable housing provided by the FRPP was clear when researchers asked about alternative housing options. Almost half of the interviewed participants stated that they would be homeless, living in a shelter, or in transitional housing such as a halfway house or three-quarter house had they not been accepted into the FRPP. Jon explained that almost all of his family now lives in Virginia—to go live with them would violate the terms of his parole, which banned out-of-state travel. If he was not in the pilot living with his wife and children in NYCHA housing, he would have to be in a shelter or a three-quarter

house, often unregulated and illegal single-occupancy residences in New York City frequented by people in substance-use recovery and formerly incarcerated people.²² Lamar reported that he simply had “no other options.” As he reflected more on his answer, he said, “I guess I would be on the streets.”

Three participants shared their experiences living in three-quarter housing before being accepted into FRPP. They spoke of frequent arguments with roommates over boundaries and the presence of drugs and alcohol, with landlords offering little support. The dirty, chaotic, and unregulated environment was best described by Che, a man in his thirties living in NYCHA housing with his girlfriend and her children, who said, “The living conditions [in three-quarter housing] are worse than in prison.” Their accounts underscored the importance of housing stability in the participants’ lives. In light of the dire alternatives, they described the stable and safe housing provided through FRPP as essential to their wellbeing.

Family reunification and support

The FRPP’s effect on family reunification was another common theme, mentioned by 25 participants and six interviewed family members. One participant described the role the FRPP played in reuniting him with his children. He was able to bring his children to his home, where he was living with his parents. The three generations were able to spend time together in a comfortable setting—something that he felt would be impossible had he been living in a homeless shelter. Brian, a man in his late twenties living with his mother, said the best part of the FRPP for him was being able to “reconnect with loved ones.” Alluding to the restrictions on people with conviction histories being on NYCHA property who are not on the lease, Franco, a man in his late forties who is living with his parents, said his family is very supportive and reported, “I’m grateful [for the FRPP]; it means I don’t need to be sneaking around to see my family.” Henry, a 50-year-old man living with his mother, joked, “My daughter was so happy she posted it on Facebook...I didn’t even know what Facebook was!”

There were bumps on the road to family reunification. Some participants spoke of their anxiety about being a stress to their family. As an example, James, a man in his late forties living with his mother, reported feeling “worried about being burdensome on my family because of my health problems,” despite being happy that the program has allowed him to stay

Reconnecting parents and children

In 2003, Tamara was sentenced to 10 years in prison and her three children were sent to foster care. Her children remained her main supports throughout her incarceration, visiting her every week after being granted special visitation privileges. She spoke with them on the phone every day, and in the women's support groups and art classes she attended, Tamara would share her children's stories with other incarcerated women. Since her release, Tamara and her children have remained present in each other's lives. Her youngest is still in foster care, while her two older children are independent adults. When her oldest child aged out of the foster care system, he signed a lease for his own NYCHA apartment.

Between the two years of her release and acceptance into the FRPP, Tamara was unable to find stable housing. Chronic physical and mental health problems made getting a job difficult. Twice a week she attends physical therapy, and once a week an anger-management group. During this time, Tamara lived with various family members. When her parole officer told her about the FRPP, she shared the information with her oldest son and they were accepted in 2015. She sets aside money from public assistance to help pay for household expenses. With the support of her service provider, she continues to see her youngest daughter once a week.

close to his mother. Many participants also said that the first few months were hard—it took time for them to earn family members' trust. For example, Jon reported that it took his children a little time to get used to having him back, but they now have a strong relationship. David, a 40-year-old man living with his mother, stepfather, and brother, reported that the reunification “was not hard for [my family] once they saw I was alright and felt more comfortable...they worried a lot when I first got back.” And finally, Franco said that now things with his family are “calmer and happier,” but in the beginning it “was like walking on eggshells.” He reflected that with the passage of time, his family has become more trusting.

Participants and family members alike agreed that everyone benefitted from sharing the family home. Participants emphasized how the FRPP facilitated their contributions to the family and the reciprocal relationship they enjoyed in the household. For example, Maria, a wife of a program participant, said that the program had “saved [her] husband's life.” She added that having her husband home was helpful because he took care of the house and did the laundry. Lisa, a participant's sister, said that through the FRPP, “I got my brother back. I didn't have him for half my life.” She also discussed how her brother contributes by “using his food stamps to help the family,” and that “if he relapses he knows we are there for him.” Max, a participant's father, reported that having his son back living with him is “beautiful” and that their close-knit family helped their son get a job when he came home. He was quick to say, “The family is supportive of him but it is mutually supportive, it is a beautiful relationship.”

The mutually beneficial relationships were most evident when

participants lived with elderly parents. Three participants became the primary caregiver for elderly parents, taking on daily responsibilities such as helping them get dressed, reminding them to take medication, and chaperoning them to their healthcare appointments. Another eight participants provided financial support for their parents. Diego, a 49-year-old man living with his mother, said, “The transition home has been beneficial for my mother because now I can take care of household chores and take her to get dialysis.” He talked about how this positively affected his extended family as well. He said, “Me living here has relieved that responsibility from my aunts and uncles who [now] do not have to visit as often.” Another participant, Albert, lives with his elderly mother and being at home allows him to care for her. She supported him through his incarceration by providing money and talking to him on the phone. He sees the FRPP as “a blessing”: He can now return the support she gave him. All of the participants who took on familial roles described family responsibilities as motivating, not burdensome. Many reported feeling empowered and purposeful once they were reunited with their family and being able to contribute in the ways they could—whether that was financially by offsetting costs or paying bills, or being there for their children to help with school. (See Figure 4 for additional responses from FRPP participants on family bonds and support.)

Figure 4

FRPP and family bonds: Participant interview responses

	Participant responses (n=29)*
Primary social support to participant	
Parents	18
Siblings	11
Other family	6
Children	4
Significant others	3
Friends and community	2
Person offering financial support to participant	
Parents	12
Siblings	3
Significant others	2
Others	17
Those receiving social support from participant	
Family in home	14
Parents	14
Children	9
Significant others	5
Those receiving financial support from participant	
Parents	14
Children	9
Significant others	4
Those offering support before incarceration	
Parents (social, financial)	8
Siblings (social, financial)	7
Significant others (social)	3
Friends and community (social)	3
Themselves	11
Relationships with children	
Participants with children	16
Maintain close relationship with at least one child	14

*Participants could give multiple responses.

Strengths and weaknesses of the FRPP

To explore the pilot's strengths and weaknesses, Vera researchers interviewed staff at 11 of the 13 participating reentry service organizations. Their experience working with and assisting the reentry population, and their understanding of reentry needs, uniquely qualified them to assess the strengths of the FRPP and core components.

Strengths of the FRPP's design

All 11 providers interviewed described the program's design as thoughtful and collaborative between NYCHA and service providers. An example of the collaborative nature of the pilot was evidenced in NYCHA's willingness to revise eligibility criteria to include applicants who were previously permanently excluded. Prior to this change, providers faced challenges referring applicants who had a permanent exclusion. Based on the suggestion of the FRPP partners, NYCHA expanded eligibility, resulting in 39 people with permanent exclusions applying and 25 enrolling in the program.

FRPP stakeholders

The relationships among the FRPP stakeholders and their continued collaboration throughout the planning and implementation stages were critical to the program's success. During the planning stages, NYCHA, service providers, Vera, and CSH hosted meetings with tenant associations for feedback on the program's design and model. Once FRPP was in the pilot stage, the partners met regularly to discuss implementation challenges, participant successes, and strategies to improve the program. CSH hosted monthly meetings, including representatives of NYCHA, DOCCS, DHS, and Vera, which focused on service provider updates and challenges. Vera and CSH led quarterly stakeholder meetings that included representation from the same partnering organizations as well as representatives from the Mayor's Office, the Department of Probation, and the New York City DOC, and provided a space for information-sharing on the FRPP's progress. The quarterly meetings were also an opportunity to collectively examine any programmatic issues that arose and strategize about what the FRPP would look like beyond the pilot stage. These partnership meetings helped build relationships

among people across various agencies and open lines of communication. These connections played a vital role when the program faced implementation challenges. For example, the service providers helped to inform the changes to NYCHA's approach toward participants with permanent exclusions and the change in eligibility from 18 months to three years post-release.

The partners' varying expertise and experience also fostered creative problem-solving for certain applicants. For example, one participant applied for the reentry program while still incarcerated. Because of his gang involvement prior to his incarceration, he felt it would not be safe for him to return to the NYCHA housing where his mother lived. NYCHA interviewed him as well as his correctional counselor while he was in prison and determined he would be a good candidate for the program. NYCHA helped his mother move to another housing development so that when he left prison he could go directly home. He continues to do well today thanks in large part to open communication among DOCCS, NYCHA, and the other FRPP partners.

The most important element to come from the interviews with service providers about the pilot was that it provided stable housing. Ten of the 11 providers interviewed reported that from their experience, housing was often the central reentry need, affecting people's abilities to successfully reintegrate into society. They also said that by providing stable housing, the FRPP allowed participants to focus on other priorities such as getting a job or rebuilding family relationships. They viewed the program as a catalyst for, and a bridge to, healing families. Critically, the service providers regarded the program's provision of stable housing as protecting participants from the risk of further justice-system involvement and their families from eviction.

FRPP Weaknesses and Implementation Challenges

While service providers regarded the FRPP as a successful reentry housing program for formerly incarcerated people, all described one particular barrier to making it fully successful—the shortage of successful referrals. Vera identified four factors that emerged when service providers were asked about weaknesses in the program's design and implementation challenges: widespread distrust of NYCHA among current and former NYCHA housing residents, difficulties enrolling youth, follow-through on applications, and rigid eligibility requirements.

Distrust of NYCHA

The most common theme about enrollment challenges expressed in the interviews with service providers was potential clients' and families' distrust of NYCHA. Nine service providers reported that several potential participants and family members failed to complete their applications because they were suspicious of NYCHA's intentions. Some family members spoke of their fear that the application could expose them to eviction. Others believed that NYCHA completely prohibits people with conviction histories from living on their premises.

Service providers described NYCHA tenants' fear that the program would allow NYCHA to unduly investigate a family's lease. For instance, one service provider said, "If a family member has a problem with NYCHA, [they believe] it may hinder an individual's chances of getting into the program. If they are delinquent on rent, they are worried it would result in further investigations." Another said that families were frequently resistant to cooperate because they were unsure of the "extent of the invasiveness" of the program, wary that NYCHA administrators would frequently enter their homes. One provider said

that family members were “worried that signing up for the program would be an entrapment,” resulting in a termination of their lease.

Difficulties enrolling youth applicants

Four service providers working with youth between the ages of 16 and 24 believed their clients’ ages were a factor limiting the number of successful referrals. A provider serving both adults and youth said that the majority of the referrals they made were for adults. In one provider’s experience, some youth who applied had existing or unresolved conflicts with their families that resurfaced at the time of their application. Even if the agency was able to mediate and convince the family and the youth to begin the application process, old tensions arose, with neither side willing to compromise. As of September 2016, only six participants were between the ages of 16 and 24.

Several service providers also reported that some family members feared the youth’s presence in the household would jeopardize their lease. Another service provider expressed the opinion that youth do not want to return home. One provider said that youth recently released from incarceration often saw returning to live with their family members as relinquishing their newfound freedom. Youth may view their unstable living arrangements (such as bouncing between friends’ or family’s homes) as a period of liberation and freedom from family rules.

Lack of follow-through on applications

Six service providers described their clients’ unpredictable and disorganized life circumstances as factors that limited their ability to complete applications. Potential participants had trouble keeping appointments with service providers to complete the application process. Providers had difficulty maintaining consistent communication with their clients—citing frequent phone number changes. Providers recognized that their clients experienced the application process as long and tedious, particularly if they are also involved in parallel processes such as securing health and public benefits. These challenges underscore the often unstable and overwhelming nature of people’s reentry process.

Onerous eligibility requirements

Seven service providers also attributed the program’s limitations to factors inherent in the pilot’s design. They said that the initial eligibility

requirements prohibiting people with permanent exclusions were overly stringent. Providers also described how other eligibility requirements early in the pilot phase, such as being released from incarceration for no more than 18 months, made the process of finding eligible clients a “constant struggle,” and, ultimately, hindered the pilot’s potential impact.

The unmet need for the FRPP

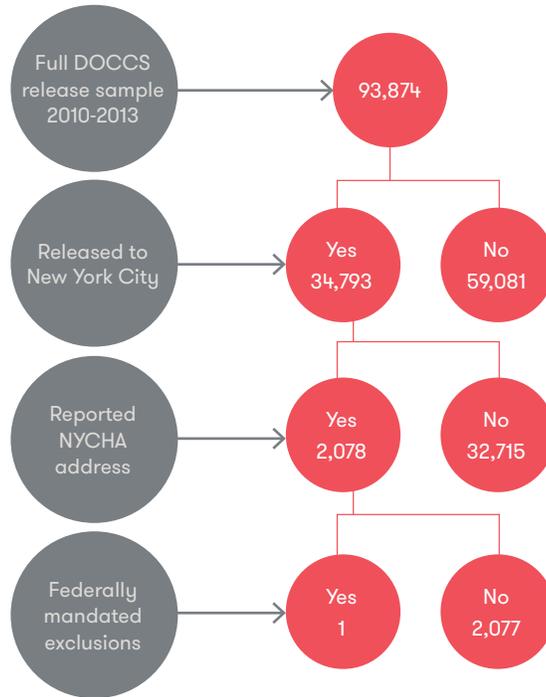
Despite recruitment challenges, the outcomes and results that were attributed to the FRPP reported by participants, families, and service providers highlight the importance of the program for people returning to their communities from incarceration. Vera produced estimates of the number of people who could benefit from an expansion of the FRPP based on analysis of administrative data—specifically, New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) data on releases from state prisons with reported return addresses to NYCHA housing and New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) data on releases from New York City jails with shelter contact and a history of living in NYCHA housing. Based on the analysis, Vera estimates that at least 500 people annually released from prison could reunite with their families if NYCHA expanded the size of the FRPP. Considering the large number of people admitted to and released from jails every year, this number may be an underestimate. DHS administrative data reveals an additional 2,255 people who reported living in a NYCHA address who were released from a New York City jail between 2010 and 2013 and sought housing in a DHS shelter. This figure does not include people released from New York City jails who did not go to a homeless shelter, or people otherwise eligible for the pilot who were released from jail without a documented history of living in NYCHA housing.

FRPP-eligible pool of people released from prison and jail

Vera found that between 2010 and 2013, 2,077 DOCCS releases, or 1,953 unique people released from DOCCS, reported returning to a NYCHA housing development and did not have either of the two federal offense restrictions (see Figure 5).²³ This number represents 6 percent of all people released from state prison to New York City, or at least one in every 17 DOCCS releases.

Figure 5

New York State DOCCS releases eligible for NYCHA FRPP 2010-2013*

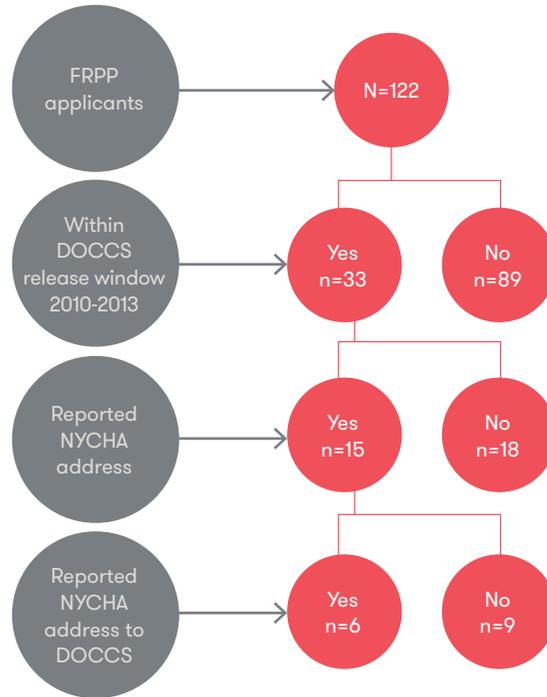


*The 2,077 is the number of releases during this period. There were 1,953 unique people in this dataset; 116 have multiple releases (two or three) in the data.

Measuring the need for the FRPP based solely on self-reported addresses likely underestimates the number of people who could be eligible for the pilot program. For example, people may not report a NYCHA address as a return address because of their understanding of NYCHA policies. To learn more about the potential scope of this underestimate, Vera researchers conducted an additional analysis of the applicant pool to estimate the number of people who have ties to NYCHA housing and do not report a NYCHA address upon release but eventually return there from prison. Data on the 33 people who applied to the FRPP who were released between 2010 and 2013 was matched to the DOCCS dataset. The search used three criteria—name (first, last), date of birth, and release date—and this provided 15 strong matches out of 33 (see Figure 6).²⁴ Of the 15 matches, only six people had a NYCHA building as their return address. This suggests there is a higher percentage of people released from prison that are potentially eligible for the program but were not associated with a NYCHA address. Based on this analysis, Vera estimates the number of people released from prison with NYCHA ties annually could be as high as 1,250—much larger than the estimated 500 estimated on the basis of reports of a NYCHA last-known address.

Figure 6

Flowchart for a subset of FRPP applicants found in DOCCS matches²⁵



Recommendations

The findings of this evaluation indicate mixed results. The pilot program's implementation followed its design, and service providers, participants, and family members responded to it positively. However, enrollment challenges hampered its effectiveness. The analysis of the administrative data also demonstrates the need for an expanded program in New York City.

While existing challenges affected enrollment, the FRPP pilot provided opportunities for NYCHA to interact with public housing community members to dispel concerns, build relationships, and serve as a medium to bring families together. And despite enrollment challenges, the pilot helped participants as they reintegrated into the community and allowed families to live together. If the program is able to overcome challenges related to enrollment, an expanded reentry-housing program within NYCHA commensurate with the need for it has the potential to help thousands of people and their families.

Through this evaluation and as an implementation partner, Vera learned that the key factors that contributed to the FRPP's success were its design and effective partner collaboration. The FRPP is rooted in NYCHA—it is a housing program, first and foremost, serving formerly incarcerated people. Through the pilot, NYCHA focused on fostering the success and safety of its tenants while the reentry service providers and the law enforcement agencies each contributed in their capacity to support participants and their families. NYCHA and its partners had various roles in the application and selection processes, allowing for each to be held accountable while facilitating constant communication among the partners, promoting transparency. A design that deliberately promotes transparency, communication, and partnership was essential in the successful implementation of the FRPP.

Significant literature has documented the importance of secure, stable housing, and family support for formerly incarcerated people. Yet only a small number of PHAs nationally are currently considering programs for the reentry population or changes in policies to allow formerly incarcerated people to return to their families in public housing. The lessons learned from the FRPP's implementation yielded the following recommendations for PHAs as they consider implementing their own version of the FRPP or revising their policies to allow more family reunification. Vera is currently working to produce a comprehensive guide to implementing public housing reentry programs and reforming public housing policies for formerly incarcerated people drawing on lessons learned from PHAs across the nation.

1) Consider broad eligibility requirements

When considering the program's design, there is value in keeping applicant eligibility as broad as possible. Rigid eligibility guidelines leave no room for discretion on the part of the program administrator, and programs may have difficulty finding eligible applicants. Reflecting on NYCHA's program, the 18-month post-release period was extended to three years in 2014 to increase the pool of eligible participation after low intake numbers at the outset. Another step NYCHA took was revising its policy to allow people who were permanently excluded from its housing admission into the program as long as they met all other eligibility criteria. These changes enlarged the eligible pool of applicants, increasing NYCHA's efforts to minimize the negative impact of a criminal conviction and open a wider door for more people to return home.²⁶

2) Foster collaboration and partnership among diverse stakeholders

A key factor in the success of the program was the collaboration and partnership of the diverse group of stakeholders. The partners' varying perspectives, roles, and expertise lent the program the ability to address a wide range of reentry needs at different junctures. The willingness of agency leaders, parole officers, and corrections staff to problem-solve, talk through various housing options, and find the right balance between facilitating a person's successful reentry and considering the community's safety has been central to the program's success. PHAs interested in implementing similar reentry-housing programs should consider following this model of diversity and frequent communication among the partnering agencies.

3) Educate public housing residents on housing authority policies

A reentry-housing program's success is tied to residents believing in and legitimizing it. Lack of trust or understanding about the public housing agency can adversely affect its success. In the case of the FRPP, NYCHA residents' distrust of the agency negatively influenced the pilot's implementation. It often came from misperceptions and the lack of knowledge around NYCHA's admissions policies. As the FRPP partners became aware of this issue, they devised strategies to educate residents on current policies and to dispel myths about NYCHA's practices, sometimes through the assistance of community organizers and legal service providers. PHAs interested in implementing a similar program would do well to consider including resident leaders and tenant organizations in a campaign to educate residents. By highlighting the housing authority's positive strides to assist formerly incarcerated residents and their family members, they could go a long way to diffusing tensions.

Conclusion

For people with criminal records, public housing exclusions present a formidable obstacle to gaining a firm footing when they return to their community from jail or prison. These stringent rules took root in a period of rising public concern of drug-related violent crime and aimed to improve safety for public housing residents. But they have added a heavy burden to the other residual effects of incarceration, making a successful

transition into the community close to impossible for large numbers of people who have nowhere else to turn except to their families in public housing.

Because a significant body of research has shown the correlation between unstable living conditions, homelessness, and the risks for reoffending, the federal government under President Obama since 2011 has urged local housing authorities to loosen their restrictions on allowing people with criminal records to rejoin loved ones in public housing. In New York City, NYCHA piloted the FRPP to see what a multi-agency collaboration could achieve in widening the opportunities for people returning home after incarceration.

By offering a stable living environment with family members and a wide array of services to help people get on their feet, the FRPP pilot has shown promise in reducing the risks for recidivism and launching participants toward productive lives, while maintaining public safety. Vera's estimate of the number of formerly incarcerated people excluded from public housing in New York City because of their criminal history points to the need for an expanded program, which potentially could benefit thousands.

Further research examining a larger pool of formerly incarcerated people with family in public housing can serve to more precisely calculate how many are affected by existing NYCHA admission policies. Additional research could focus on people under parole supervision who end up living in NYCHA housing; those detained in a New York City Department of Correction facility who reported living in NYCHA housing; or participants in an expanded FRPP housing program who do not live in NYCHA immediately upon release from prison or jail.

Formerly incarcerated people do not constitute a protected class under the federal Fair Housing Act. Nevertheless, public housing exclusion policies fall most heavily on communities of color, whose members are disproportionately represented in the nation's jails and prisons. Recently, the national public debate about reducing the numbers of incarcerated people has begun to include the question of whether these housing practices amount to discrimination against already marginalized people. If New York City and other jurisdictions around the country are to reduce incarceration rates and level the ground for racial equity, they must remove the bars to safe, decent housing for this returning population.

Appendix A

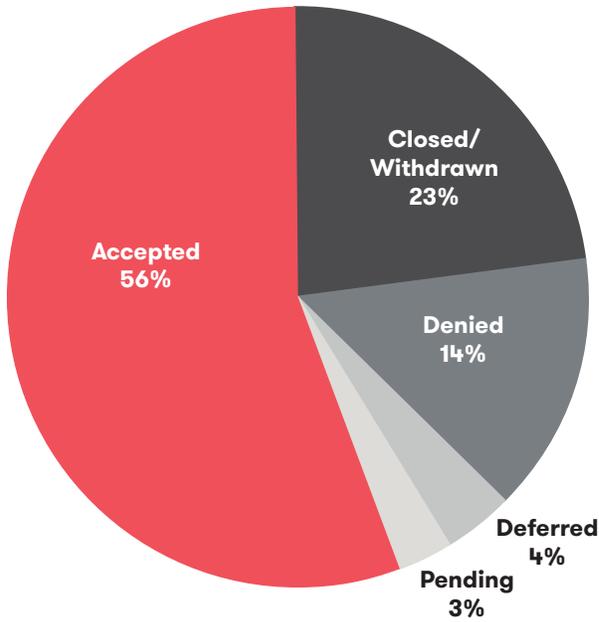
Descriptive statistics for DOCCS and FRPP-eligible releases, and FRPP applicants

	DOCCS releases (2010-2013) N=34,793	FRPP eligible matches N= 2,077	FRPP applicants ¹ N=122	FRPP participants ² N=62
Characteristics				
Age (at release)	37.6	35	37.5	37
Male (percent)	94.7	95.1	87.7	90.3
Female (percent)	5.3	4.9	12.3	9.7
Race/Ethnicity				
Black Non-Hispanic	55.5	63.1	63.9	64.5
White Non-Hispanic	7.4	2	3.3	4.8
Other Non-Hispanic	2.1	0.7	-	-
Black & Hispanic	7.5	8.8	-	-
White & Hispanic	13.1	12.9	-	-
Other & Hispanic	12.4	10.5	-	-
Hispanic	-	-	30.3	29
Biracial	-	-	0.8	0
Multiracial	-	-	0.8	1.6
Unknown	2	2	0.8	0
Returning county				
Bronx	28.2	25.1	13.1	11.3
Brooklyn	29.5	32.9	39.4	35.5
Manhattan	24.7	27.8	37.7	40.3
Queens	14.8	12	8.2	11.3
Staten Island	2.8	2.2	1.6	1.6
Offense for most recent incarceration				
Violent	41.7	43.2	45.1	51.6
Other coercive	10	10.9	-	-
Drug	33.5	32.5	-	-
Property/Other	14.4	13	-	-
Juvenile Offender	0.4	0.4	-	-
Offense class				
A Felony	4.6	3.3	11.7	15.7
B Felony	29	26.6	27.7	31.4
C Felony	20.2	21.4	20.2	23.5
D Felony	32.4	35	22.3	17.6
E Felony	13.8	13.7	3.2	2
A/B Misdemeanor	-	-	14.9	9.8
Sentence (in months)				
Minimum	48.7	46.3	-	-
Maximum	76.8	70	-	-
Actual time served	43.5	42.4	-	-

Appendix B

Status of applications and applicant information (as of September 2016), N=153¹

Status of submitted applications



Accepted	85
Closed/Withdrawn	35
Denied	22
Deferred	6
Pending	5

Time in Community (at time of application)

Incarcerated	43 (28%)
< 1 Year	71 (46%)
1-3 Years	39 (26%)

Borough

Brooklyn	60 (39%)
Manhattan	58 (38%)
Bronx	22 (15%)
Queens	11 (7%)
Staten Island	2 (1%)

Probation/Parole

Yes	112 (73%)
No	41 (27%)

Appendix C**FRPP participants (as of September 2016), N=85¹****Highest level of education completed**

	FRPP participants	Percent
Some high school	19	22.4
High school diploma	6	7.1
High school equivalent	28	32.9
Some college	16	18.8
Associate degree	4	4.7
Bachelor's degree	4	4.7
Master's degree	1	1.2
Unknown	7	8.2

Living status at time of application

	FRPP participants	Percent
Incarcerated ²	18	21.2
Halfway house	2	2.4
Nursing home	1	1.2
Shelter	9	10.6
Three-quarter housing	2	2.4
With friends	14	16.5
With other family	32	37.5
Work release	7	8.2

Average rent and income

	FRPP participant households³	NYCHA⁴
Average rent	\$397	\$486
Average household income	\$17,231	\$23,820

Endnotes

- 1 For a discussion of stable housing and its impact on recidivism, see Demelza Baer, Avinash Bhati, Lisa Brooks, Jennifer Castro, Nancy La Vigne, Kamala Mallik-Kane, Rebecca Naser, Jenny Osborne, Caterina Roman, John Roman, Shelli Rossman, Amy Solomon, Christy Visher, and Laura Winterfield, *Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry: Research Findings from the Urban Institute's Prisoner Reentry Portfolio* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center, 2006), 8; Katharine H. Bradley, R.B. Michael Oliver, Noel C. Richardson, and Elspeth M. Slayer, *No Place Like Home: Housing and the ex-prisoner* (Boston: Community Resources for Justice, 2001). For a discussion of the impact of stable housing on homelessness, see Stephen Metraux and Dennis Culhane, "Homeless shelter use and reincarceration following prison release," *Criminology and Public Policy* 3, no. 2 (2004): 139-160.
- 2 In 2014, state and federal correctional facilities released 636,300 people. See E. Ann Carson, *Prisoners in 2014* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015), 9. In 2013, 11.7 million people were admitted into jails. See Ram Subramanian, Ruth Delaney, Stephen Roberts, Nancy Fishman, and Peggy McGarry, *Incarceration's Front Door: The Misuse of Jails in America* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2015), 7. For a discussion of immediate challenges of securing housing faced by people returning home from prison, see Baer et al., 2006, 8.
- 3 For this study, 72 percent of respondents reported expectations of living with a family member upon release. See Christy Visher, Nancy La Vigne, and Jill Farrell, *Illinois Prisoners' Reflections on Returning Home* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2009), 6.
- 4 The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 established a permanent ban on lifetime sex offender registrants; the Independent Agencies Appropriations Act of 1999 barred households with any member who was convicted of producing methamphetamines in public housing. See Lahny R. Silva, "Criminal Histories in Public Housing," *Wisconsin Law Review* 5, no. 24 (2015): 375-397.
- 5 Newark Housing Authority, "Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policies," (Newark, NJ: NHA, July 2012), 149, <https://perma.cc/J5VN-CSFL>.
- 6 On November 2, 2015, the Secretary of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development announced guidance to public housing authorities on using criminal arrests for denying admissions to public housing. See US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Public and Indian Housing, "Guidance for Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) and Owners of Federally-Assisted Housing on Excluding the Use of Arrest Records in Housing Decisions," Notice PIH 2015-19 (Washington, DC: HUD, November 2, 2015), 1-7, <https://perma.cc/UP78-DVSH>.
- 7 For an in-depth look at admissions restrictions for public housing authorities across the nation, see Marie Claire Tran-Leung, *When Discretion Means Denial: A National Perspective on Criminal Barriers to Federally Subsidized Housing* (Chicago: Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, 2015), vii.
- 8 A study of people returning from prison to Cleveland found 17 percent of the study's participants were living with those who have also been to prison and 23 percent were residing with others who abused alcohol and drugs, which may conflict with parole stipulations forbidding contact with former prisoners and being in the proximity of drugs and alcohol. For more on this study, see Christy A. Visher and Shannon M.E. Courtney, *One Year Out: Experiences of Prisoners Returning to Cleveland* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center, 2007), 3. In New York City, 11 percent of people released from the state corrections system between 1995 and 1998 have experienced a stay in a homeless shelter, and shelter use, before and after incarceration, is associated with a higher risk of incarceration. See Stephen Metraux and Dennis Culhane, "Homeless Shelter Use and Reincarceration Following Prison Release," *Criminology and Public Policy* 3, no. 2 (2004): 139-160. People with a history of shelter use prior to incarceration were also much more likely to use shelters post-incarceration. See Stephen Metraux, Caterina G. Roman, and Richard Cho, *Incarceration and Homelessness* (Washington, DC: National Symposium on Homelessness Research, 2007), 5-7. A recent study in New York City revealed street and homeless people were more likely than housed people to be rearrested within one year of release after a prior arrest. Those who were homeless in the street and shelter were also more likely to be rearrested for a felony than those who were not homeless, revealing the cyclical relationship between homelessness and incarceration. In a 2013 sample, 60 percent of street homeless people and 50 percent of shelter homeless people were rearrested in a year, compared to 29 percent of those with housing. See Richard R. Peterson, *Re-arrests of Homeless Defendants in New York City* (New York: New York City Criminal Justice Agency, 2016), 3.
- 9 For a discussion on the relationship between stable housing and employment, see Baer et al., 2006, 4. Unstable housing may disrupt a person's application during the process to secure employment, as prospective applicants will be required to present a stable address, and studies have shown those living in transitional housing upon release from prison found it difficult to secure employment. See Amanda Geller and Marah A. Curtis, "A Sort of Homecoming: Incarceration and the housing security of urban men," *Social Science Research* 40, no. 4 (2011): 1197; Bradley et al., 2001. Marta Nelson, Perry Deess, and Charlotte Allen, *The First Month Out: Post-Incarceration Experiences in New York City* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 1999), 16.
- 10 For more on the health of formerly incarcerated people, see Kamala Malik-Kane and Christy A. Visher, *Health and Prisoner Reentry: How Physical, Mental, and Substance Abuse Conditions Shape the Process of Reintegration* (Washington, DC: Urban

- Institute, Justice Policy Center, 2008), 12-13. For a discussion of treatments and stable housing, see Geller and Curtis, 2011, 1197.
- 11 For more on family support for formerly incarcerated people, see Rebecca Nasner and Nancy LaVigne, "Family Support in the Prisoner Reentry Process: Expectations and Realities," *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* 43, no. 1 (2006) 93-106; Nancy G. La Vigne, Christy Visser, and Jennifer Castro, *Chicago Prisoners' Experiences Returning Home* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2004), 7-8.
 - 12 Positive post-release outcomes were reported among fathers with increased involvement with their children. Fathers who had lived with their children pre-incarceration and kept regular contact while incarcerated were more likely to be involved in their children's lives immediately following release. Strong father-child involvement immediately after release was significantly associated with those men working more hours per week and reporting lower rates of recidivism and substance use. People on parole with strong family ties were more likely to be employed, and those who were employed and had strong family ties were less likely to reoffend. See Christy A. Visser, "Incarcerated Fathers: Pathways from prison to home," *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 24, no. 1 (2013): 9-26. Formerly incarcerated people who were living in transitional housing were found to be more likely to abscond from parole, and parolees who changed addresses increased their likelihood of being rearrested. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents who stated they were going to live in shelters upon release absconded from parole, compared to 5 percent who did not report living in a shelter upon release. See Nelson, 1999, 9. The likelihood of arrest increased by 25 percent for Georgia parolees each time they changed their address. See Caterina Gouvis Roman and Jeremy Travis, "Where Will I Sleep Tomorrow? Housing, Homelessness, and the Returning Prisoner," *Housing Policy Debate* 17, no. 2 (2006): 395.
 - 13 HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan and Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing Sandra B. Henriquez, Letter to Public Housing Authority Executive Directors, (Washington, DC: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, June 17, 2011) <https://perma.cc/TBW4-ES6C>.
 - 14 Ibid.
 - 15 US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Public and Indian Housing, "Guidance for Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) and Owners of Federally-Assisted Housing on Excluding the Use of Arrest Records in Housing Decisions," Notice PIH 2015-19 (Washington, DC: HUD, November 2, 2015), 2, <https://perma.cc/UP78-DVSH>.
 - 16 National Housing Law Project, "Innovative PHA Programs for Formerly Incarcerated," <https://perma.cc/A658-QW3E>
 - 17 Data saturation occurs when the threshold to obtain new information from interviews has been reached, and no additional coding of interview data can occur. See Patricia I. Fusch and Lawrence R. Ness, "Are We There Yet? Data Saturation in Qualitative Research," *The Qualitative Report* 20, no. 9 (2015): 1408.
 - 18 NYCHA Resident Databook Summary, <https://perma.cc/ZR8B-KPTG>
 - 19 For NYCHA residents, "Other" includes people who identified as Asian and multiracial.
 - 20 Documented achievements and milestones were for 55 unique people of the 85 participants, indicating that several participants achieved multiple goals. At the time of this report, several participants were recently accepted, and service providers had not yet submitted progress reports for them. Other participants were being supported through worker's compensation or existing disability benefits, and had no milestones to account for in their progress reports. Further, the progress reports reflect only the first six months of program participation. Additional milestones beyond the first six months were not recorded.
 - 21 All names associated with participants in the report are pseudonyms to protect their identity.
 - 22 For a report on three-quarter housing in New York City, see Robert Riggs, *Three Quarter Houses: The View from the Inside* (New York: Prisoner Reentry Institute, 2013).
 - 23 In interpreting this number, it is important to bear in mind that DOCCS release records data sometimes include multiple records for one person—meaning that an individual may have multiple releases in any given period. The extent to which repeat releases occur is largely a function of the size of the observation window—shorter windows (for example, one month) will be unlikely to contain any repeats, while longer windows (for example, a year or more) will be increasingly likely to have multiple records per person. Within these 2,077 eligible cases, there are 1,953 unique persons—116 of whom have multiple records (two or three) in the data.
 - 24 Since, in principle, FRPP applicants may not (in the first instance) have been released to New York City (but arrived there later) the DOCCS matching sample was opened to all DOCCS cases (N=93,874) as opposed to only those who were released to a New York City borough (n=34,793). This ensures that an FRPP applicant can still be matched even if their first address post-release is not in New York City, but elsewhere in the state. A second round of matching used only name and date of birth, yielding an additional four matches who are clearly represented in the DOCCS data. Their release date was not an exact match and was not included in the analysis.
 - 25 The 122 applicants in Figure 6 represent the number of applicants as of April 2016.
 - 26 The program's broader eligibility criteria allowed service providers to refer greater numbers of their clients.

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- a These also include temporary or permanent loss of certain civil rights (such as the right to vote or hold public office); employment or occupational licensing restrictions; restrictions on certain aspects of family life (such as the ability to adopt or retain custody of one's own children); and for non-citizens, deportation. See Ram Subramanian, Rebecka Moreno, and Sophia Gebreselassie, *Relief in Sight? States Rethink the Collateral Consequences of Criminal Conviction* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2014), 8.
- b For additional information on federal public housing policies, see Silva, 2015, 380-382.
- c Some of the housing options for those returning home from prison are: (1) community-based correctional housing facilities; (2) transitional (service-enriched) housing (non-corrections based and not HUD funded); (3) federally subsidized and administered housing; (4) homeless assistance supportive housing; (5) the private market. See Caterina Gouvis Roman and Jeremy Travis, *Taking Stock: Housing, Homelessness, and Prisoner Reentry* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center, 2004), vi. For a thorough discussion of housing options and related barriers, see Roman and Travis, 2004. Also, some halfway houses have been cited as profit-driven, concerned only with filling beds, and indifferent toward residents' outcomes. See Sam Dolnick, "Pennsylvania Study Finds Halfway Houses Don't Reduce Recidivism," *The New York Times*, March 24, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/25/nyregion/pennsylvania-study-finds-halfway-houses-dont-reduce-recidivism.html>.
- d For a discussion of informal barriers related to housing, see Roman and Travis, 2004, 31.
- e For more on familial barriers to returning home, see Bradley et al., 2001.
- f New York City Housing Authority, "New York City Housing Authority's Tenant Selection and Assignment Plan," (New York: NYCHA, January 22, 2016) <https://perma.cc/LYR5-7XW9>.
- g Tony Hebert, *Invisible Tenant: Living in Federally Assisted Housing After Prison* (New York: Family Justice, 2005, NCJ 233273).

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- a Categories of relationships that NYCHA considers as familial include: husband, wife, son, daughter, stepson, stepdaughter, father, mother, stepfather, stepmother, brother (including half-brother), sister (including half-sister), grandfather, grandmother, grandson, granddaughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, father-in-law, mother-in-law, and registered domestic partner of the tenant. See New York City Housing Authority, "Resident Policies and Procedures: Occupancy and Succession (Remaining Family Member) Policy Overview," <https://perma.cc/4RGK-KFA6>. The eligibility window was extended from 18 months to three years in 2014 to increase the pool of eligible participants. NYCHA made the modification after discussions with the reentry service providers, informed by research that demonstrates that it can take up to three years for formerly incarcerated people to fully acclimate back in society, find housing, and get work. See Jeremy Travis, Amy Solomon, and Michelle Waul, *From Prison to Home: The Dimensions and Consequences of Prisoner Reentry* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2001), 6.
- b For more on Temporary Permission to Join a Household, see New York City Housing Authority, "Resident Policies and Procedures: Occupancy and Succession (Remaining Family Member) Policy Overview," <https://perma.cc/4RGK-KFA6>.
- c A person is permanently excluded from a NYCHA apartment when they have been proven to have engaged in "undesirable activity," a wide category that includes conduct or behavior that constitutes: a danger to the health and safety of residents, conduct of a moral offense on NYCHA property, a source of danger to employees, premises, or property, a danger to peaceful occupation of other tenants, or a common law nuisance. New York City Housing Authority, "Grievance Procedures," (New York: NYCHA, August 1997), 4, <https://perma.cc/YL8Q-FNR9>. Upon being permanently excluded, the excluded person jeopardizes the resident's tenancy by even stepping foot on the premise of the apartment where he or she has been excluded. In order for a household to apply to remove PE, an application must be based on a "substantial change" including new employment, education, or other community activities that have been demonstrated and sustained by the person over at least five years. See New York City Housing Authority, "Guide to Fair Hearings (Trespass)" (New York: NYCHA, 2013), 2-3, <https://perma.cc/ZC9U-Q8Y4>.
- d NYCHA defines "extremely overcrowded" as an apartment with more people than the standard occupancy limit and the overcrowded occupancy limit. The standards vary by the number of rooms, bedrooms, number of people, and the familial relationships between residents. See New York City Housing Authority, "Tenant Selection and Assignment Plan," (New York: NYCHA, January 2016), <https://perma.cc/43HV-FUFT>.
- e Factors NYCHA will consider when deciding whether to terminate participation for violations that do not result in a criminal conviction include (1) whether the participant committed an offense against a NYCHA housing resident or employee; (2) whether the offense was drug-

related or alcohol-related; (3) whether the offense involved violence, including domestic violence; (4) the likelihood that the offense could adversely affect the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of NYCHA housing premises; and (5) whether he or she engages in actions that would have resulted in permanent exclusion from the household if he or she were a permanent, authorized household member.

Appendix A

- 1 As of July 2016.
- 2 As of July 2016.

Appendix B

- 1 Vera collected data on applicants throughout the pilot period. Data presented in this appendix represents data available through September 26, 2016.

Appendix C

- 1 Vera collected data on applicants throughout the pilot period. Data presented in this appendix represents data available through September 26, 2016.
- 2 Includes two participants released from an Office of Children and Family Services facility.
- 3 Administrative data were available for 58 households at the time of this analysis.
- 4 NYCHA Resident Databook Summary, <https://perma.cc/ZR8B-KPTG>.

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For more information about this report, contact Ram Subramanian, editorial director, at rsubramanian@vera.org.

Vera Institute of Justice
233 Broadway, 12th Fl
New York, NY 10279
T 212 334 1300
F 212 941 9407

Washington DC Office
1111 14th St., NW, Ste 920
Washington, DC 20005
T 202 465 8900
F 202 408 1972

New Orleans Office
546 Carondelet St.
New Orleans, LA 70130
T 504 593 0936

Los Angeles Office
707 Wilshire Blvd., Ste 3850
Los Angeles, CA 90017
T 213 223 2442
F 213 955 9250