

# Opening Doors: How to develop reentry programs using examples from public housing authorities

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Fact Sheet

There are more than 3,000 public housing authorities (PHAs) in the United States that are often the primary sources of affordable housing in the community. For people who are being released from prison or jail, they are also places to re-connect with their families and to establish a foundation for employment and other opportunities, factors that contribute to a person's successful transition into the community. Further, housing stability reduces the risk of homelessness, which decreases the risk of involvement in the criminal justice system.

However, admissions criteria for much of the country's public housing bars people with conviction histories. Recent public attention to the difficulties that people with conviction histories face in securing safe and affordable housing has opened opportunities for reform. Across the country, PHAs have developed reentry programs or have made changes to their policies using existing housing stock to prevent homelessness, reduce recidivism, and reunite families. Their goals in creating these programs are often the same: improving the lives of formerly incarcerated people, helping residents become self-sufficient, and keeping public housing communities safe.

This guide explores the lessons learned from implementing reentry programs and policy changes, and can be used as a resource for PHAs and other stakeholders focusing on providing housing for people involved in the justice system.

## Examples of programs and key considerations

- › The **Burlington Housing Authority** in Vermont recruits program applicants from correctional facilities, first looking to reunite participants with family members in public housing.
- › The **Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles's** Demonstration Re-entry Program allows families on the Section 8 housing choice voucher program to reunite with formerly incarcerated family members who would not otherwise be eligible to join the household.
- › Participants in the **San Antonio Housing Authority** reentry program are referred into the program by their probation officers. Those accepted receive case management services.

PHAs designing reentry programs should consider the following components during their planning:

- › Partnerships are essential to successful reentry housing programs.
- › PHAs have wide latitude in determining eligibility criteria for their programs based on an applicant's criminal history.
- › Tracking outcomes makes it possible to evaluate the success of a program. Important metrics to consider are recidivism, education and employment outcomes, and homelessness prevention.

## For more information

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## Mapping housing innovation across the country

The information in the guide is drawn from the experience and knowledge of the following housing authorities (see Appendix for a detailed profile of each PHA)

