

2023
BOSTON

**Housing for Formerly
Incarcerated Individuals**

Vera

Housing Access for People with Conviction Histories

John Bae, Opening Doors Initiative

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Vera's vision, mission, and focus

Vision

Safe, healthy, empowered communities and a fair, accountable justice system.

Mission

To end the overcriminalization and mass incarceration of people of color, immigrants, and people experiencing poverty.

STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS

1. End criminalization of people of color and immigrant communities
2. Minimize the footprint of jails, prisons, and detention centers
3. Center dignity and minimize the harms of justice and immigration systems
4. Blueprint accountable institutions that move resources to communities

Housing is a Human Right

A person's conviction history should never be a barrier to housing.



Housing for People with Conviction Histories

10X

Formerly incarcerated people are **10 times more likely to be unhoused.**

11X

The **relationship between homelessness and incarceration is cyclical.**

Housing promotes **public safety** and is essential for **successful reentry**

- Stable housing supports improved reintegration and desistance from criminal behavior for people leaving prison
- Housing makes it more likely that a person returning to their community:
 - finds and keeps employment
 - gets connected to medical, mental, and behavioral healthcare
 - rebuilds supportive and prosocial networks within their community
 - reestablishes mutually supportive bonds with family
- Housing access is associated with lower recidivism

(Lebel, 2017; Lutze et al, 2014; Metreaux and Culhane, 2004; Metraux et al, 2020; Nelson et al, 1999; Rosenfeld and Grigg, 2022)

Conviction history is not a good predictor of housing success

- Most people with a conviction never have another one.
- There is no evidence that excluding people with a conviction makes housing complexes safer.
- There is no evidence that people with conviction histories have different tenancy outcomes that those without a history of conviction.

(Bushway et al, 2022; Malone 2009; Rhodes et al, 2016; Rosenfeld and Grigg, 2022)

Criminal background checks increase racial disparities in housing access

- Racial disparities in our criminal legal system lead to inequities in housing.
- This disparate impact can result without any discriminatory intent.
- Multiple studies have found that landlords require or act on background checks for Black applicants and make exceptions for white applicants.

(Equal Rights Center, 2016; Lea, T., et al., 2015; Seattle Office of Civil Rights, 2018)

National Momentum

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

“This Fair Housing Month and Second Chance Month, HUD recognizes that current criminal justice and housing policies have denied those seeking rehabilitation a chance to lead better lives.” - HUD Secretary Marcia L. Fudge

States and local jurisdictions

- Cook County, Illinois
- Illinois (statewide PHA policy)
- Michigan:
 - Ann Arbor, Detroit, Jackson, Kalamazoo
- New Jersey
- Washington, DC

Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) Policies for Criminal Background Screening

OHFA requires all housing providers to submit tenant screening procedures for approval. OHFA policy:

- prohibits denials based on arrest records alone
- limits lookback periods to a “reasonable” period
- mandates individual assessments
- requires opportunities for applicants to provide mitigating evidence

OHFA also provides a **model criminal background screening policy** in its QAP, which considers only felony property offenses, major drug offenses, major violent offenses, and sex offenses from the last five years.

If the applicant has a covered conviction, an individual assessment must be conducted.

Louisiana Housing Corporation (LHC) Policies for Criminal Background Screening

Tenant screening policies must achieve, “substantial, legitimate, nondiscriminatory interests.” The policy also stipulates that housing providers:

- may not consider arrests, charges that did not result in a conviction, and records from the juvenile legal system
- apply specified lookback periods for certain types of convictions (3 to 5 years)
- consider reasonable accommodations if conviction was related to a person’s disability
- must allow applicants to submit mitigating evidence for an individualized assessment

Thank You

2023 BOSTON

Housing for Justice- Involved Individuals Program (HJIIP)

HJIIP Background

- Proposed in 2020 as part of Illinois Capital Bill, \$7.5 million allocated FY22 for creation of a re-entry housing program
- Working group established, request for information issued
- RFI responses helped inform program development and establish deviations from more traditional programs
 - Site control
 - Financial feasibility/underwriting
 - Units vs. beds
 - Long-term compliance requirements

HJIIP Applications

- HJIIP Request for Applications issued Q1 2022
- Eligible service provider applicants requested up to \$475,000 for acquisition, construction, and/or rehabilitation of congregate or shared housing models
- IHDA received 35 applications totaling \$16.6 million in requests
- Applications evaluated on connection to supportive services, development team capacity, and financial capacity

HJIIP Awards

- IHDA ultimately recommended 28 awards, totaling \$13.3 million in HJIIP funds
- Across six Illinois counties, 237 existing HJIIP beds were preserved/rehabbed and 270 new beds were created
- 93% of the awardees already operated transitional housing
- 34% of projects included the light-to-moderate rehab of single-family homes

Example Project 1

- Established service provider working with formerly incarcerated women, particularly LGBTQ+ community
- Acquisition-only of a four-bedroom single-family home
- Receive funding from IL Department of Corrections, charge participants monthly program fee
- \$498,454 TDC (HJIIP and sponsor funds)
- 8 new beds created



Example Project 2

- New entity serving individuals with substance use disorders
- Adaptive reuse of a medical office (Phase I) and new construction adjacent (Phase II)
- Charge participants a weekly program fee, bill insurance for treatment
- \$2.5mm TDC (Phase I & II combined, HJIIP and a bank loan)
- 16 new beds created (Phase I & II combined)



Example Project 3

- Experienced service provider working with formerly incarcerated men ages 18-24
- Adaptive reuse (former school building) and new construction for program spaces
- Charge rent on a sliding scale, fundraise for any operating expense gaps
- \$19mm TDC (HJIIP, New Markets Tax Credits, State Capital Grants, Private Grants)
- 20 new beds created





WASHINGTON STATE
HOUSING FINANCE
COMMISSION

Asset Management
and Compliance



2023 NCSHA Annual Conference

Housing Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

Lanakay Lipp, Senior Portfolio Analyst Lead

Washington State Housing Finance Commission

We are a publicly accountable, self-supporting team, dedicated to increasing housing access and affordability and to expanding the availability of quality community services for the people of Washington. [More about us](#) | [Investor Disclosures](#)





Property Information

- Construction funded by 1602 Exchange Program (originally to be a LIHTC), local county funds, State Housing Trust Fund, and Federal Home Loan Bank
- 46 units at mix of 30/40/60% AMI
- Units are fully furnished and subsidized by PBRA contract with county Housing Authority
- Purpose is to house individuals coming from incarceration with the goal of family reunification
- Extensive services are offered
- Located in an out of the way area on property down the road from a landfill
- Property is on unused county land with some existing buildings previously used as a drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility; 50-year lease for \$1
- Existing buildings were rehabbed and new built for total cost of \$8.2 M
- 2012 was first full year of operations with 40-year period of affordability

- Property location
- Staff turnover
- Difficulty working with prison caseworkers to move individuals directly in at release
- Vacancy average of 12.46% pre-covid; up to 24.36% in 2021 and 41.67% in 2022 due to changes in incarceration; average unit turn time of 203 days
- Program requires release from incarceration within last 12 months; temporarily increased to 3 years in early 2023
- Denial for serious violent crimes, 1st or 2nd degree arson, sex offense, meth/drug production
- Sponsor funds property operational shortage by \$150 to \$250k each year with endowment funds

2021 Major Income Sources:

	Operating	Services	Total
Rental Income	\$54,000		
Subsidy Payments	\$366,000		
Sponsor Contribution	\$30,000	\$190,000	
Local subsidy		\$150,000	
County Services Levy	\$53,000	\$415,000	
Other	\$7,000		
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	\$510,000	\$755,000	\$1,265,000

Major Expenses:

Staffing	\$104,000	\$580,000	
Operations	\$406,000	\$175,000	
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	\$510,000	\$755,000	\$1,265,000

Sponsor also funded Annual Reserve requirements of \$31,000