

Rental Housing Re-Entry Program

Illinois Housing Development Authority

Special Needs Housing: Combating Homelessness

HFA Staff Contact

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“The Illinois Housing Development Authority Reentry program is a real blessing. One of the many barriers that felons face when released is housing. I didn’t have a lot of options. So when I was selected for the program it was like a weight lifted off my shoulders. I was released from prison and the same day I was able to meet the property manager at the unit. I filled out some paperwork and received the keys. The unit is in a decent neighborhood. The apartment was clean and furnished with beds, couch, tv, and cleaning and personal hygiene products and much more. To be able to call my daughter in say I have my own place and you have your bedroom meant everything to me. Not having no worry about rent or utilities until I start working afforded me the opportunity to be able to put my plan in action. I’m in the process of receiving a grant to get my CDL license... For me this is a stepping stone and I’m pointed in the right direction.” recently released participant Ricky Love.

Overview

Over 27,000 individuals leave the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) system each year. Many individuals reentering society after incarceration face an array of barriers to stable and affordable housing including: unemployment, access to professional licenses, stigma, food insecurity, inadequate healthcare (mental and physical), educational and training deficiencies, lack of family support and the permanent disabling impacts of a criminal record. This leaves many as either vulnerably housed or at-risk of homelessness.

To help address this problem, IHDA partnered with IDOC to launch the Re-Entry Rental Housing Support Demonstration Program, an interagency initiative designed to meet the housing needs of individuals exiting IDOC facilities. Under the new program, IHDA has entered into funding agreements with four local administering agencies (LAA) who will deploy \$3 million in grant funding over 3 years to support housing placement and ongoing rental subsidies for 75 eligible participants specifically referred by IDOC’s new Reentry Division.

IHDA is pleased to announce that since the launch of the program, 40 formerly justice-involved people have been housed with an additional 20 planned to be housed within the next 90 – 120 days.

Program Description

The rental assistance under Re-Entry Rental Housing Support Demonstration Program is funded through the state’s Rental Housing Support (RHS) Program, a rental assistance program created in 2005 to promote permanent housing through the funding of rent subsidies for extremely and severely low-income households who are rent-burdened.

The RHS Program is funded through a \$10 fee collected from real estate document recordings. Resources are allocated by the state legislature and then distributed by IHDA to three geographic areas: suburban Chicago, small cities and rural communities. The program is publicized through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process and is open to local housing authorities, municipalities and nonprofit community groups with the organizational capacity and experience to operate housing programs.

Although individuals exiting the prison system have a wide variety of needs, the RHS Re-Entry Pilot program focuses on seniors (ages 55 and over), persons with disabilities and persons aged 35 and over with additional consideration given to individuals who have completed or enrolled in post-secondary

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educational programming. The program utilizes a community-based model where IHDA provides funding for rental assistance to four participating agencies or local administering agencies (LAAs) who identify local property owners to create a pool of affordable housing that will serve justice-involved individuals during their re-entry.

The rental assistance covers the difference in the reasonable rent for the unit and the tenant's contribution, which is based on a percentage of household income. IDOC refers individuals who have developed a pre-release plan to participate in the program in partnership with a local service provider. The service providers follow the pre-release plan to provide the individuals with the personalized supportive services needed for a successful reintegration.

The Re-Entry Rental Housing Support Demonstration Program LAAs along with their grant award amounts and the number of supported units are listed below:

- **Housing Choice Partners of Illinois:** \$1,179,367 will support 20 units in suburban Cook County.
- **Winnebago County Housing Authority:** \$830,413 will support 30 units in Winnebago, Boone and Stephenson Counties.
- **Housing Authority of Champaign County:** \$487,674 will support 15 units in Champaign County.
- **Community Partners for Affordable Housing:** \$414,642 will support 10 units in Lake County

Conclusion

IHDA's mission is to finance the creation and preservation of affordable housing for Illinois residents. For tenants, this means having access to affordable and stable housing that can be used as a platform for stability, recovery, and independence. The subsidies provided under the Rental Housing Support Re-Entry Pilot program enable us to do just that for an underserved population with a critical need for housing.

While the 75 units funded in this Pilot may seem like a small investment, the impact of the program has far-reaching consequences: individuals released from the State prison system avoid becoming homeless, reduce their use of expensive public services like emergency rooms and shelters and achieve a better quality of life with improved housing stability.

If success is seen from this pilot, IHDA will expand the program to house additional individuals leaving the State prison system.

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Jilly Graciana
Northern Illinois Reach

The Illinois housing development authority reEntry program is a real blessing. One of the many barriers that felons face when released is housing. I didn't have a lot of options. So when I was selected for the program it was like a weight lifted off my shoulders. I was released from prison and the same day I was able to meet the property manager at the unit. I filled out some paperwork and received the keys. The unit is in a decent neighborhood. The apartment was clean and furnished with beds, couch, tv, and cleaning and personal hygiene products and much more. To be able to call my daughter in say I have my own place and you have your bedroom meant everything to me. Not having no worry about rent or utilities until I start working afforded me the opportunity to be able to put my plan in action. I'm in the process of receiving a grant to get my CDL license.

To this point this whole experience with the rental assistance program has been great. If I have any problems with the unit all I have to do is call the office and someone will come out to fix the issue. I just hope other guys that were picked for the program take full advantage of this opportunity. For me this is a stepping stone and I'm pointed in the right direction. What happens from here is all on me. I have a great support system and wonderful friends and family. Really I couldn't ask for more. I just want to thank everyone from IHDA.

Sincerely,
Ricky Love

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Tracy Bolden
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It's my honor and pleasure to write to you on behalf of this great program that I am blessed to be part of. Since this program has come into my life my self-esteem has risen and my desire to be a productive member of my community has grown and I feel. When this program is expanded to include as many individuals as possible it would do the same for them as it is done for me they giving me a new lease on life. Thank you, Tracy Bolden