

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/recapping-our-homeward-bound-blog-series>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

More than 700,000 people leave jail and prison each year needing permanent housing. Studies have shown that obtaining permanent housing means that formerly incarcerated individuals are more likely to gain employment, maintain sobriety, complete parole supervision, and achieve the necessary stability to stay safely in the community. Many of the family members of these individuals live in public housing a place where people with a criminal record are often prohibited from living.

Vera's [Family Justice Program](#) is collaborating with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), the Corporation for Supportive Housing, a number of nonprofit reentry service providers, and the New York City Department of Homeless Services [on a pilot program](#), which carefully tests the hypothesis that formerly incarcerated people can thrive when supported in public housing, all while increasing public safety by reducing recidivism. Vera has also been providing research and policy guidance to the [Housing Authority of New Orleans \(HANO\)](#) to increase meaningful access to housing and employment for people with criminal records through improved screening processes. Our Homeward Bound blog series seeks to share information and spur discussion about this growing area of reform.

The first post in the series, [Increasing Access to Public Housing in New York for Formerly Incarcerated People](#), gives an overview of the NYCHA pilot program and provides critical context from the field, such as research demonstrating that most formerly incarcerated people plan to rely on their families for housing upon release.

Up next in the series is [an interview with Ron Ashford](#), director of public housing support services at the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. Mr. Ashford discusses HUD's recent efforts to highlight new initiatives from a growing number of local public housing authorities around the country that are expanding access to individuals with criminal histories. He debunks a common misconception that HUD is the arbiter of public housing rules, explaining that HUD has just two permanent debarment rules: one for methamphetamine production on public housing premises and the other for lifetime registered sex offenders and that everything else is left up to local housing authorities.

The final blog post in the series looks at a [recent House of Representatives committee hearing](#) on incarceration's collateral consequences, which centered on a National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers [report that analyzed](#) the consequences of some 45,000 laws that limit the rights and opportunities of individuals with a criminal record. The report highlights both the NYCHA pilot and Vera's work with HANO as examples of new opportunities that are developing and testing evidence-based practices to promote successful reentry for formerly incarcerated individuals all while supporting public safety and reducing recidivism.

We look forward to continuing the discussion about improving reentry outcomes through housing access, and invite your questions and comments.

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