

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/homeward-bound-a-property-managers-perspective>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

What are your thoughts about the Family Reentry Pilot Program and what do you see as its biggest strengths?

The Family Reentry Pilot Program is one of the best initiatives for family reunification implemented in NYCHA. Throughout my time at NYCHA, I have encountered individuals who have been released from jail or prison who wish to return to their families in NYCHA.

For many families there is not another option. The two biggest challenges faced by those who were formerly incarcerated are securing stable housing and obtaining employment. Without a stable place to live it is that much harder to find a job, which can result in feelings of hopelessness and possibly lead individuals to return to negative lifestyles out of desperation.

I feel that people deserve a second chance and I am optimistic about the program because it opens a new avenue for people to get their lives back together. Not only does this program reunite families, but it strengthens communities and enhances public safety by expanding legitimate opportunities for individuals who are returning to the community.

Has the program been helpful to any residents in your development?

Yes. I vividly remember meeting with a resident in the summer in 2013 whose son had just been released from prison. The son was young and looking forward to starting a new chapter in his life, so it was important for him to return to live with his mother so that she could help him turn his life around. But that wasn't an option.

Then about a year later, I was at a NYCHA training for property managers and I learned about the pilot. I remember sitting in the training and wanting to run back to my office to tell my resident about this great opportunity. I couldn't wait to tell her and to let her know that there was hope and a light at the end of the tunnel. The resident and her son were so excited to hear this news and came to my office where I gave them all of the information that they needed.

Today, her son is enrolled in the program. He lives with her, has found a stable job, and is working. I see him sometimes in the morning on his way to work and he always has a big smile on his face and shakes my hand. He is so positive. This is not the same person who was sitting in my office eight months ago. He has truly transformed his life as a result of this program.

How have other residents reacted?

I have encountered some residents who are hesitant. However, I then explain that people deserve a second chance, that the program is based on family reunification, and that the entire family is committed to the success of the individual.

How was your experience with referring residents to the pilot?

The process has been very efficient and my referral moved quickly. I was able to directly connect with NYCHA's Family Services Department who connected the applicant and his family to a reentry service provider who completed the entire application process. It is very easy to make a referral or to ask questions. NYCHA has a dedicated email and phone line for this pilot, family.reentry@nycha.nyc.gov and 212-306-6024, that connect you with a NYCHA Family Services Department Specialist.

Is there anything else that you think is important for other property managers to know about the Family Reentry Pilot Program?

It is important for property managers to know that the pilot is now open to people who were previously permanently excluded from NYCHA. NYCHA will now temporarily suspend the permanent exclusion and, upon successful completion of the program, the participants' family can apply to have the permanent exclusion removed.

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