

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/looking-beyond-conviction-history>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

Safe, affordable housing is essential for the millions of people released from U.S. jails and prisons each year. But most public housing authorities (PHAs) have admissions policies that prevent formerly incarcerated people from living there. For nearly all types of convictions, housing authorities exercise their individual discretion to set eligibility criteria. Federal policymakers have encouraged PHAs to rethink limits on public housing for people with criminal conviction histories and to actively address barriers to housing that can reinforce discrimination. The Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) developed the eight recommendations in this fact sheet to do just that. The recommendations are informed by Vera's work with PHAs, law enforcement agencies, county and state corrections departments, reentry service providers, homelessness service providers, continuum of care organizations, resident advocates, and other community stakeholders through its Opening Doors initiative.

The eight recommendations in this fact sheet can help public housing authorities (PHAs) actively address discriminatory barriers to housing for people with criminal conviction histories.

Most public housing authorities have admissions policies that prevent formerly incarcerated people from living there.

For nearly all types of convictions, housing authorities exercise their individual discretion to set eligibility criteria.

PHAs could align their eligibility criteria with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development recommendations by discontinuing the use of one-strike policies, which deny admission to anyone with a criminal record.

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