

# Vera Institute of Justice

## Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

**<https://www.vera.org/blog/finding-housing-is-hard-but-for-people-leaving-prison-and-jail-its-almost-impossible>**

### Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Too often we have closed the doors that would lead to a better life for a whole segment of our community people who are formerly-incarcerated.

One of these doors is housing. [Each year, more than 600,000 people return to society from prison](#) and 11 million people cycle in and out of our nations jails. [Research shows](#) that restrictions on housing for formerly incarcerated people can lead to a dangerous cycle of reincarceration. And yet, these people are often barred from either moving back in with their family members or obtaining their own housing on release due to their arrest and conviction histories leading many to live on the street or in shelters and become caught in the system again. Some people with conviction histories can wait up to seven years after the dates of their convictions and sometimes longer before they become eligible for public housing.

But even a waiting period can have a devastating effect on a persons reentry process. It can also [increase their chances of recidivating](#) leading to a cycle of reincarceration. In fact, [nearly 70 percent of formerly incarcerated](#) people nationally are re-arrested within three years of their release. Even more striking, [nearly 60 percent of formerly incarcerated people](#) who live on the street because of barriers to housing are rearrested within the very first year after being released.

In recent years, however, there has been growing momentum to ease restrictions around housing for formerly incarcerated individuals. In 2017, Vera launched the [Opening Doors to Public Housing initiative](#) to expand access to housing for people with conviction histories. Now, with funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), [Vera has selected four new sites](#) that will receive up to 12 months of technical assistance to plan and implement reentry programs and/or change their admissions policies to be more inclusive of people with conviction histories. The new sites Lafayette Housing Authority, Louisiana; San Diego County, CA Housing Authority; Oklahoma City Housing Authority; and Delaware State Housing Authority will work to safely increase access to housing for people with conviction histories and improve the safety of public housing and surrounding communities through the use of reentry housing strategies.

We must take a hard look at how we treat people who have repaid their debt to society. We should open doors, not shut them.

*Check out our [new fact sheet](#) to learn more about how we're safely increasing access to public housing for people with conviction histories.*

PUBLICATION

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