

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/innovative-reentry-practices-for-incarcerated-people-coming-home>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

For an incarcerated person, leaving prison can be both exhilarating and overwhelming: freedom is finally palpable. But, for over 700,000 people leaving prisons and jails annually, the pressure of finding a home is an immediate and paramount strain.

The mark of a past criminal record eliminates many housing possibilities precisely at the moment when finding a home is most critical to survival. Private landlords and many public programs routinely deny applicants outright upon indication of a past felony record. These practices have broad impact: over six million people in the United States have a criminal record that localities often use as a basis to [restrict access to housing](#). For those whose families live in public housing, similar restrictions can further separate them from loved ones. These policies and practices disproportionately impact men and women of color, who face the additional scrutiny and burden of racial bias and discrimination.

On November 15, 2016, the Vera Institute of Justice, together with Trinity Church Wall Street and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), will convene government, nonprofit, law enforcement, the general public, and residents directly impacted by these issues to examine the challenge and promise of public housing for people with criminal conviction histories. All are welcome to join this national gathering, which will be [livestreamed](#) in its entirety.

With thousands of housing units across the country, public housing remains an important resource for the successful reintegration of people leaving prisons and jails. For the formerly incarcerated whose families already reside in public housing, returning to live with them is often key to rebuilding their lives after release. The national convening will examine not only the value and necessity of public housing for this population, but also the nuances of a policy landscape where local discretion continues to predominate the housing application process. National implementation of recent HUD guidelines about prior conviction histories, newly published research about programs such as the New York City Housing Authority's successful [Family Reentry Program](#), and the lived experience of participants in these programs, will also inform this public conversation.

Housing is perhaps the most basic human need. For the people leaving our country's prisons and jails who already experience precariousness due to poverty, unemployment, chronic illness, and the prison experience itself, finding home is all the more urgent and important. We invite you to join us on November 15, and to stay engaged on this critical issue of providing housing to some of the most vulnerable and marginalized among us.

PUBLICATION

VIDEO

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