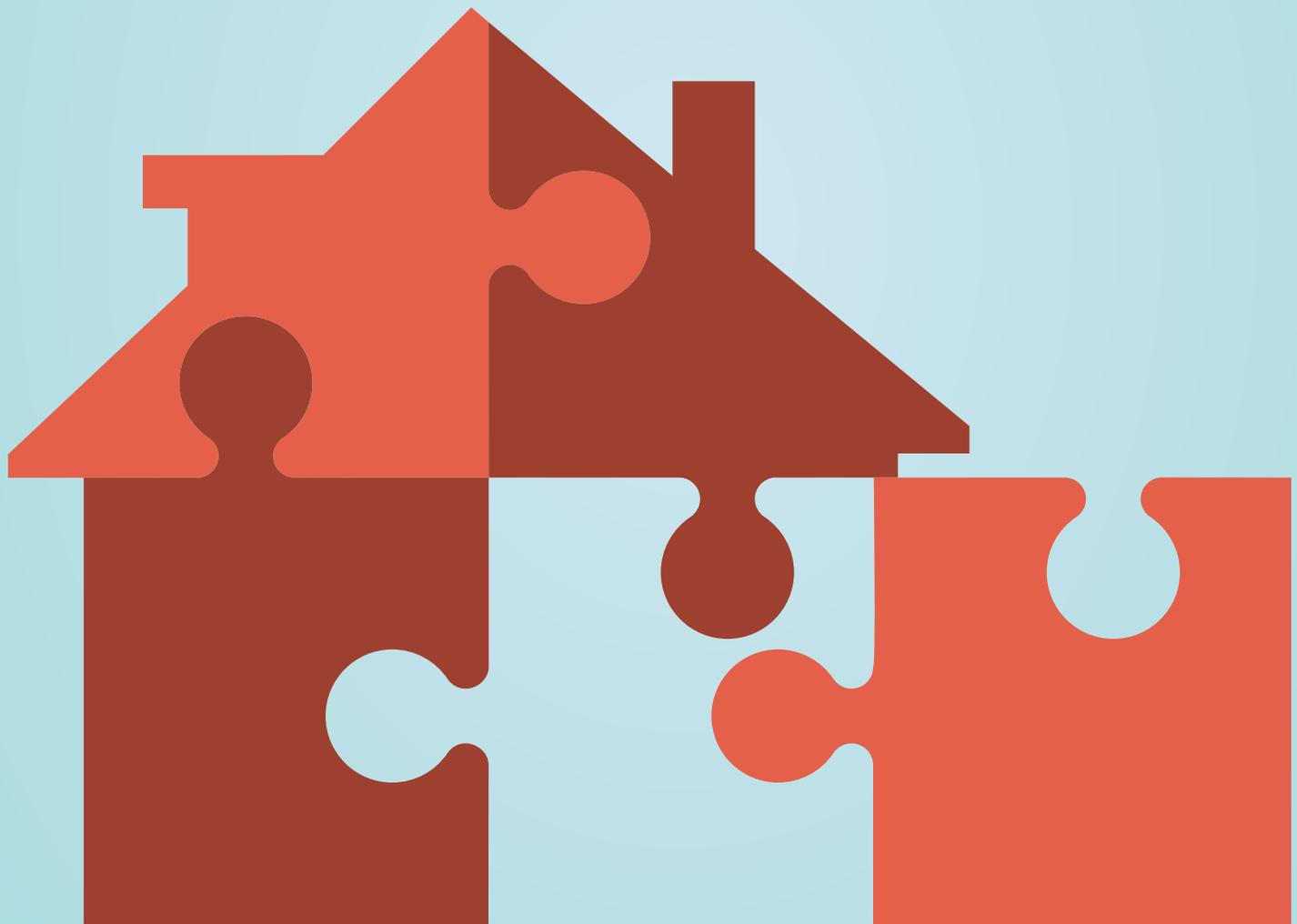


Housing Is Justice

Exploring State and
Local Innovations



Project Team

This project and paper are a joint product of the Center for Justice Innovation and the NYU Furman Center Housing Solutions Lab.

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The Center for Justice Innovation, <https://www.innovatingjustice.org/>, works with communities and justice systems to advance equity, increase safety, and help individuals and communities thrive.

The NYU Furman Center Housing Solutions Lab, localhousingsolutions.org/lab/, helps small and mid-size cities plan, launch, and evaluate evidence-based local housing policies that advance racial equity; increase access to opportunity; and improve long-term health and well-being for residents.

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Executive Summary

Housing insecurity and justice system involvement often create a reinforcing, vicious cycle that has long-lasting effects for individuals, families, communities, and government systems.

The people harmed by this cycle are overwhelmingly low-income people of color. Restrictive eligibility criteria for housing assistance, tenant screening practices, and crime-free ordinances limit access to housing based on arrest records or convictions. Detention and incarceration disrupt housing stability and create a wide range of economic challenges that make it extremely hard to regain it. People experiencing homelessness are significantly more likely to be arrested than those who are housed and, in many places, risk criminal charges for carrying out basic life functions in public. They also face a greater risk of being detained in jail pending trial and are less likely to participate in diversion programs, resulting in a range of worse outcomes. And the list goes on.

However, there are reasons for optimism. This paper explores ways that, in jurisdictions across the country, justice system actors and housing agencies have partnered to break this cycle.¹ Through interviews as well as a survey, literature review, and program scan, this project investigates these partnerships and asks what innovations have emerged, what challenges impede these partnerships, and what drives success. While our project is not intended to give an exhaustive inventory of partnerships, the data we collected provide valuable insights about the promise and challenges of criminal justice and housing system partnerships.

Innovations

Affordable housing is a scarce commodity, especially for justice-involved people. Yet creative partnerships have resulted in policies, practices, and investments to improve housing stability for this population by pursuing four goals:

Preventing criminal justice involvement

One category of interventions aims to prevent the housing instability-criminal justice cycle through alternatives to traditional criminal legal processes. Programs like King County, Washington's Law Enforcement-Assisted Diversion (LEAD) initiative and the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) in Missoula, Montana are law enforcement-led efforts used to divert people from the criminal legal system and instead connect them with services to gain and maintain housing stability.

Connecting justice-involved people to resources and support

Even where resources are scarce, the sooner justice-involved people are connected to support to address housing insecurity, the better both housing and justice outcomes will be. We uncovered numerous initiatives through which public housing authorities, corrections agencies, and other actors provide assistance navigating social services and the housing search process. In Washington, D.C., the Reentry Action Network has created a clearinghouse of reentry resources to increase

1. Throughout this paper, when we refer to justice system actors or agencies, we mean people working in the criminal legal system, including law enforcement, pre-trial programs, prosecutors, defense counsel, courts, corrections, probation, and parole. When we refer to housing agencies, we are talking about government agencies that develop, finance, or operate subsidized housing or provide housing-related assistance such as rental vouchers.

awareness of available support and facilitate access to services. Treatment courts and other problem-solving courts use the opportunity of engagement to assess and address housing need.

Expanding access to housing

Several innovative interventions expand access to existing housing and housing subsidies for justice-involved people. Multiple public housing authorities have adopted more inclusive admissions criteria, and a number of jurisdictions have limited private landlords' abilities to exclude prospective tenants based on criminal records. Many housing finance agencies have rewritten their rules

to incentivize housing developers to prioritize housing access for justice-involved people in Low-Income Housing Tax Credit housing.

Increasing housing supply

Some interventions address the shortage of affordable housing directly by creating new housing options. The Just Home initiative has invested in building or acquiring affordable housing to serve justice-involved people in four communities in California, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and South Dakota. The Homecoming Project and the Kinship Reentry Project take a different approach to opening up new housing options by facilitating home sharing for people leaving incarceration.

Challenges to Collaborations

Partnerships between housing and justice agencies can result in creative solutions. So why aren't they more common? Our interviews reinforced evidence that cross-sector collaborations can face considerable challenges, including:

Insufficient political will

Justice agencies are not designed to, and typically don't, think about housing or work closely with housing partners. Inertia, combined with the common perception that housing problems are intractable, creates steep barriers to change. Housing agencies, meanwhile, are overwhelmed by demand for affordable housing and often have little incentive to prioritize or accommodate a stigmatized population of justice-involved people.

Misaligned incentives

Housing agencies and justice agencies have high-stakes and clearly defined goals that don't always align, especially in the short run. While addressing the housing needs of justice-involved people can result in substantially reduced costs for state and local governments, savings are often delayed and spread across different budgets and thus have less motivating power.

Data sharing barriers

Housing and criminal justice agencies may not be accustomed to sharing data with each other and may resist doing so because of privacy concerns, a sense of territoriality, or simple inertia. When agencies are willing to

share, it is often difficult to clean, merge, and analyze datasets originating from different systems. Data-sharing barriers may hinder timely referrals or leave agencies unable to gauge the scale of need or target resources strategically. They can also undermine agencies' ability to understand the impact of their programs.

Lack of a common language

Differences in the structure, bureaucracies, or mindsets of housing and criminal justice agencies, in some cases exacerbated by gender disparities and bias, can make it difficult for staff at these agencies to communicate effectively or collaborate on new initiatives.

Limited resources

A range of resource limitations also make cross-sector collaborations difficult. Insufficient funding, inflexible funding mechanisms, inadequate staff capacity, and time limitations all add to the already challenging task of doing work that is outside of agency norms.

Keys to Success

Interviews with practitioners working on interventions at the housing/justice system intersection revealed some common elements of successful collaborations.

Alignment

Align goals and incentives for collective gain.

Practitioners noted misaligned goals as a major impediment to collaboration, and many had to work creatively to align incentives or uncover existing but unnoticed alignment across agencies. Some did this by working to prove how an intervention can solve multiple problems; some through analysis that revealed shared target populations or pain points across diverse agencies; others by reorganizing government agencies to expand and align budgets, resources, and goals.

Stakeholder engagement

Solve problems and show proof of concept to win partners over.

Strategic engagement with partners was a common theme in our interviews. Many practitioners talked about the importance of showing proof of concept and collaboratively solving problems with partners to build trust.

Relationships matter

Foster individual relationships as catalysts.

It surprised us how often in our interviews the origin story behind a successful intervention involved an individual stepping outside their traditional role to solve a longstanding problem or spearhead an initiative, partnership, or interagency relationship. Building trust and relationships on an individual staff level was important in getting to a place where partnerships were possible.

The right team

Put the right people in the right roles.

The importance of getting the right people on the bus and in the right seats, to paraphrase, is a common management principle and emerged as an element of success in almost all of our interviews. Many practitioners highlighted having team members with experience in the systems at issue; frontline staff who also had lived experience with challenges faced by program participants; and leadership focused on creative problem-solving as central to their success.

Individual stability and health, community safety, and decarceration efforts depend on developing effective policies and programs that break the pernicious cycle between housing instability and justice involvement.

This project aimed to explore how partnerships can make progress on these thorny issues to find housing solutions for justice-involved people and identify ways to support and expand cross-sector collaborations. We examined the barriers to cross-sector work and the strategies that are key to overcoming those challenges to show not just that change is possible but what drives it.

We encountered many successful examples of innovation in diverse locations around the country. The kind of innovative collaborations our project highlights must move from notable outliers to the norm. This work is critical if we hope to make any progress towards ending the mutually reinforcing relationship between homelessness and incarceration.

1. Introduction

The vicious cycle of housing instability and criminal justice system involvement is well-established. Individuals involved with the criminal justice system encounter barriers to securing and maintaining stable housing, while housing instability also contributes to involvement and unfavorable outcomes in the criminal justice system.

These harms are disproportionately borne by low-income communities of color.

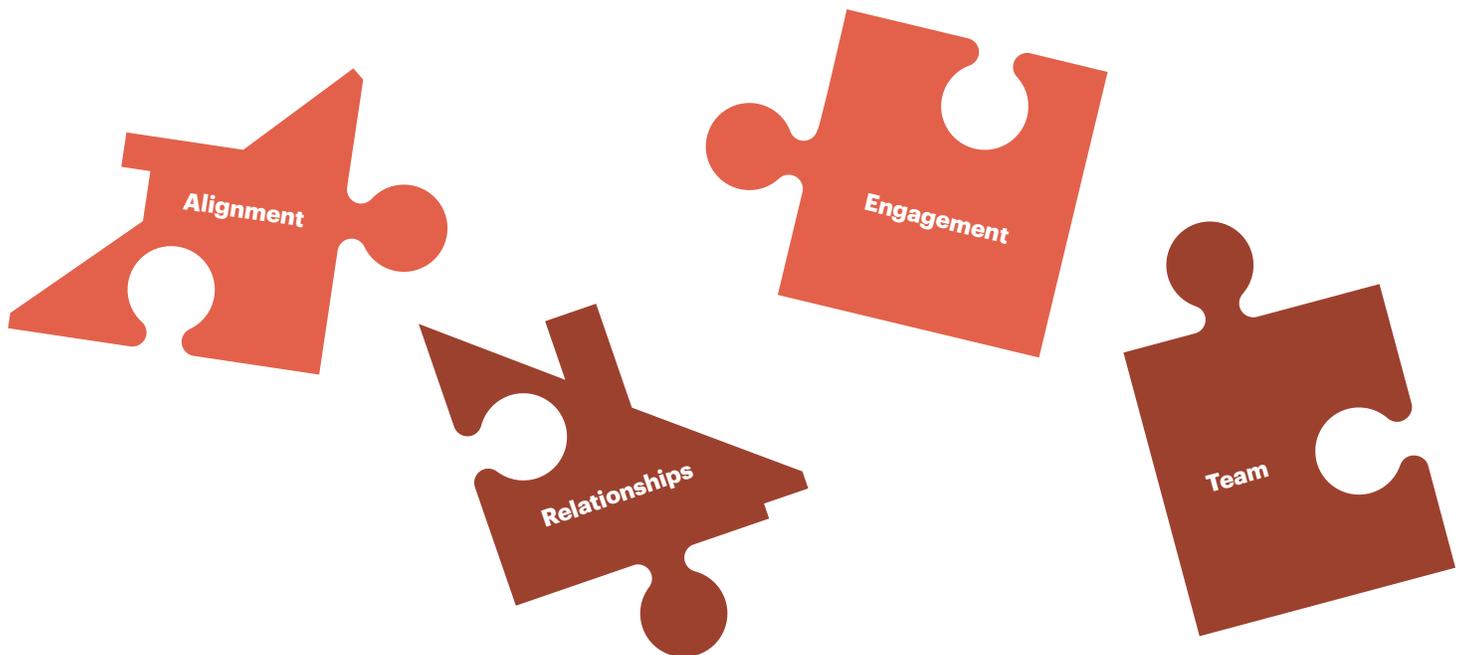
The nation's affordable housing crisis exacerbates the difficulty of addressing housing needs for people involved with the justice system, as do the stigma and discrimination that people with criminal records routinely face.

This project examines ways in which local housing and justice system practitioners are partnering to break these negative, reinforcing, and racially unjust cycles.² We leverage two national networks of state and local government practitioners—one in housing and one in criminal justice—and their partners to explore how they formed and sustained successful collaborations. The interventions we studied showcase the wide array of tangible solutions practitioners are implementing across the country, from preventing criminal justice involvement and connecting individuals to existing supports to expanding access to housing and increasing housing supply.

Our findings also reveal how practitioners in a wide range of geographies and political contexts have navigated the barriers to cross-sector collaboration. We identify key elements that have enabled innovative partnerships to succeed, including aligned incentives and goals across agencies, a willingness to problem-solve and provide proof of concept to engage stakeholders, the right team

of practitioners, and individual relationships that serve as catalysts for change. These practitioner perspectives and real-world examples offer crucial insights for future interventions and program design, as well as the kind of support needed from funders and technical assistance providers. Most importantly, they demonstrate that the barriers to cross-sector collaboration are surmountable.

In the sections below, we describe our methods (Section II) and provide background on the relationship between housing instability and justice-system involvement (Section III). We then describe interventions we encountered that attempt to disrupt this cycle (Section IV) before discussing the challenges to, and key components of, successful cross-sector engagements (Section V). Appendix A highlights examples of cross-sector collaborations across the country that intervene at different stages to disrupt the link between justice involvement and housing instability. Appendix B provides additional context and examples of funding sources identified during our interviews and program scan.



2. Throughout this paper, when we refer to justice system actors or agencies, we mean people working in the criminal legal system, including law enforcement, pre-trial programs, prosecutors, defense counsel, courts, corrections, probation, and parole. When we refer to housing agencies, we are talking about government agencies that develop, finance, or operate subsidized housing or provide housing-related assistance such as rental vouchers.

2. Methods

We conducted an online survey and 32 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with practitioners to find cross-sector partnerships, explore how practitioners perceive and navigate the homelessness-carceral cycle, and identify the hurdles of cross-sector collaboration.

To inform our data collection, we reviewed literature exploring the relationship between housing insecurity and criminal justice involvement, as well as the challenges and common dynamics of cross-sector collaboration. We also conducted a program scan to identify examples of housing and criminal justice partnerships nationally, drawing from information shared in interviews and an online search of programs (see Appendix A).³

We distributed an online survey through the Center for Justice Innovation’s technical assistance network and several other national justice-focused distribution lists. Our survey questions asked for respondents’ observations about housing instability and its effects on the criminal legal process, how they have partnered with housing agencies in the past, and what kinds of collaborations across housing and criminal justice agencies might be helpful. Our goals for the survey were exploratory, and we did not aim to collect a representative sample or one that could form the basis of a statistical analysis.

We received 66 responses from criminal justice government actors around the country, working at several different phases of the criminal legal process.

Respondents included judges, probation officers, public defenders, prosecutors, law enforcement personnel, and administrators of a wide range of government programs related to reentry, housing, social services, and homelessness prevention. A small number of respondents agreed to be contacted for follow-up interviews.

The information we gathered from survey responses informed our interviews with practitioners and our understanding of jurisdictions’ needs.

Whereas the survey was an opportunity to gather information about partnerships from a broad group of criminal justice system practitioners, the interviews provided an opportunity for in-depth discussion about specific partnerships bridging the criminal justice and housing sectors. We interviewed practitioners working on housing and/or criminal justice issues in government, advocacy, and social services. Our outreach to practitioners also

allowed us to connect with interview respondents with lived experience who were collaborating with or consulting for practitioner teams. Semi-structured interviews followed a topic guide and predetermined set of open-ended questions designed to provide opportunities for practitioners to express themselves fully and space for interviewers to ask follow-up questions in response to topics that emerged during the interview. Our topic guides focused on how the intersections of housing and criminal justice appear in practitioners’ work; their experiences, if any, with cross-sector collaboration; and strategies for expanding

housing options for justice-involved people. We spoke with housing and criminal justice practitioners from all regions of the country (Midwest, Northeast, Northwest, Plains, and South); from small and large cities; and from rural and urban areas.



3. We learned about the programs highlighted in this brief through these various methods and did not speak directly with the operators of all the programs discussed below.

3. The Cycle of Housing Instability and Criminal Justice Involvement

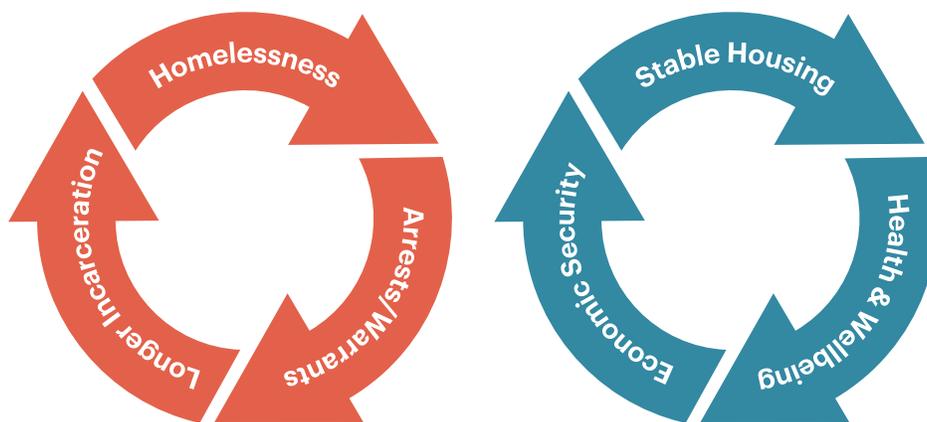
A substantial body of research has documented the relationship between housing insecurity and criminal justice involvement, as well as its disparate racial impacts.⁴ Our interview and survey respondents echoed what others have found and provided notable insights from practitioners actively addressing these complex issues.

Several practitioners working in the justice system noted how crucial stable housing is for success at every stage of the process and, conversely, how easily housing instability can undermine success. Stable housing helps people avoid arrest in the first place; indeed, in many areas people experiencing homelessness face criminalization for carrying out life-sustaining activities in public. Stable housing also makes it more likely that someone will be released after arrest, and it facilitates the mental and physical ability to return to court, work with defense counsel, and engage in the process. Many practitioners reported that a lack of housing or a local address can be a barrier to participation in diversion programming and treatment courts. Indeed, some practitioners cited housing instability as the biggest barrier to participation. Practitioners reported that housing instability weighs into release decisions, impacting perceived flight risks, bail imposition, and the availability of alternatives like elec-

tronic monitoring and supervised release. We heard from some practitioners that judges will not release someone into homelessness, and in some states, there are formal rules that preclude parole into homelessness.⁵ The unavailability of housing (both because of outright scarcity and because of residency restrictions and other barriers some justice-involved people face) thus negatively impacts the ability to mount a defense and leads to prolonged pretrial detentions and extended incarceration post-sentence.

Our survey findings and discussions with practitioners also highlighted the persistent connection between housing insecurity and criminal justice involvement and the particular challenges justice-involved people face in the housing market. Criminal justice involvement can create a cascade that threatens housing stability. Arrest, case processing, and detention can result in missed work, fines and fees, familial conflict, evictions, and

Cycles of Housing Instability and Stability



4. "Arrests Are Driving Housing Loss," Partners for Justice, March 2023, <https://www.partnersforjustice.org/evidence/arrests-drive-homelessness>.

5. "Illinois prison crisis due to residency restrictions," The Chicago 400, <https://www.chicago400.net/how-about-now>.

other consequences that destabilize financial well-being. When people find housing upon release, the limited stock available to them can be far from services and jobs, creating financially burdensome transportation needs. Applying for housing while incarcerated is challenging (and, in some cases, impossible), and nearly 50,000 people enter homeless shelters immediately upon release from incarceration each year in the United States.⁶ Restrictive eligibility criteria for housing assistance, private landlords' tenant screening practices, and crime-free ordinances can limit access to housing based on arrest records or convictions. Financial constraints and restrictions on living with family members⁷ further compromise housing prospects for many people.

Many respondents noted how existing affordable housing shortages interacted with specific justice-related impediments, making it almost impossible for justice-involved people to find housing. In the private rental market, particularly in higher-cost jurisdictions, housing shortages give landlords significant power in selecting tenants. Low-income residents and people of color are often disadvantaged by poor credit scores; inability to pay application fees, security deposits, and rents; discrimination; or prior experiences of housing insecurity and eviction. A criminal record pushes individuals, most of whom also face the challenges that come with being a low-income renter of color, further to the back of the line. One practitioner described being told by local landlords that individuals with past criminal justice system involvement would be unable to pay rent. "One landlord said that they knew how high legal system fees and fines were. I

hate that they're right," the practitioner said. Another respondent observed that those with criminal records often remain involved with the police and are at risk of recidivism, rendering them a liability in landlords' eyes. Others noted the persistent stigma a criminal record carries and the "growing corporatization" of the housing sector, which removes human empathy from the tenant screening process.

Many respondents noted how existing affordable housing shortages interacted with specific justice-related impediments, making it almost impossible for justice-involved people to find housing.

The lack of available supportive housing is a particularly difficult challenge. Practitioners described a severe lack of transitional and permanent supportive housing in their communities, especially for men and those with mental health needs. Some also described attitudes among housing and service providers that cast those with criminal justice histories as undeserving of limited resources. One practitioner reported often hearing

responses like, "When people who are supposedly doing everything right can't access housing, why should we care for ex-criminals?" Respondents agreed that sober and halfway houses do not offer an adequate alternative and may discriminate against certain groups, including people who require medications.

Legal landscapes also varied across jurisdictions and impacted practitioners' experiences. Some states and cities impose limitations on how landlords and property managers consider criminal histories in tenant background checks.⁸ Others impose steep fines and fees that further deplete the limited resources of people attempting to find stable housing after detention.⁹ Public housing authorities (PHAs) have discretion to house the

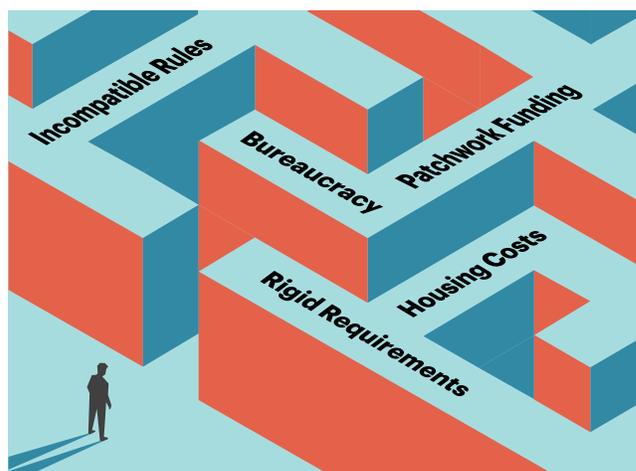
6. "Homelessness and Incarceration Are Intimately Linked. New Federal Funding is Available to Reduce the Harm of Both," National Alliance to End Homelessness, March 29, 2018, <https://endhomelessness.org/blog/homelessness-incarceration-intimately-linked-new-federal-funding-available-reduce-harm/#:~:text=Almost%2050%2C000%20people%20a%20year,against%20those%20with%20criminal%20records.>

7. People returning from incarceration may not be able to live with family if doing so would mean living with a victim or with a firearm in the home, or they may be barred under the terms of a lease.

8. See, e.g., "50-State Comparison: Limits on Use of Criminal Record in Employment, Licensing & Housing," Restoration of Rights Project, last modified 2020, <https://ccresourcecenter.org/state-restoration-profiles/50-state-comparison-comparison-of-criminal-records-in-licensing-and-employment/>; McKenzie, Britny J. and Evan Dash, *Criminal Legal Records: An Impediment to Housing Choice*, (Queens, NY: Fair Housing Justice Center, 2023), https://fairhousingjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Criminal-Legal-Records--An-Impediment-to-Housing-Choice-FULL-w_-Cover.pdf.

9. "Civil and Criminal Justice," National Conference of State Legislatures, last modified 2024, <https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/assessing-fines-and-fees-in-the-criminal-justice-system>; Menendez, Matthew et al., *The Steep Costs of Criminal Justice Fees and Fines*, (New York, NY: Brennan Center for Justice, 2019), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/steep-costs-criminal-justice-fees-and-fines>.

vast majority of justice-involved people,¹⁰ but many PHAs nevertheless have broad exclusionary policies, despite guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) discouraging such practices.¹¹ Some include arrests in their definition of criminal activity, even though arrests do not establish misconduct. Others consider criminal histories as far back as twenty years or even impose lifetime bans.¹² Exclusion from public housing assistance is such a ubiquitous experience that some practitioners reported that people with criminal records will screen themselves out of housing or services on the assumption that they will not qualify for support.



The practitioners we spoke with sometimes underscored the heightened difficulties faced by specific groups. Among these, people convicted of sex offenses experience particularly acute challenges accessing housing due to legal restrictions that severely limit their housing options and the stigma associated with their convictions. One practitioner described securing stable housing for members of this group as “nearly impossible,” and only one practitioner reported having navigated this barrier by using local rather than federal funds for a housing program. Even in that case, successful housing placements were upended when a building was sold to a new owner.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic further complicated the challenge of disrupting the relationship between housing insecurity and criminal justice involvement. Practitioners described how the pandemic led to an increase in street homelessness when people were less able to “double up” with friends or relatives and when local jurisdictions worked to reduce jail and prison populations. At the same time, however, pandemic relief measures introduced new and more flexible funding

streams, which practitioners were able to leverage to develop and implement innovative strategies.

Finally, practitioners raised challenges related to their interactions with HUD. Issues included problems applying HUD’s definition of chronic homelessness to people who cycle between homelessness and jail, bureaucratic hurdles, and vouchers that don’t meet market costs in competitive housing markets.¹³ We heard that it can be particularly difficult for small jurisdictions and rural areas with limited government infrastructure to navigate HUD programs. At the same time, practitioners noted ways in which HUD has prioritized improving access to housing for justice-involved people and has supported PHAs in adopting more inclusive policies. The agency has also announced a plan to adopt regulatory changes and to provide technical assistance to HUD grantees to guide more individualized assessments of prospective tenants’ criminal histories and remove unnecessary barriers to housing.¹⁴

10. Under federal law, public housing denials are mandatory for only two categories of offenders: people on the lifetime sex offender registry and people convicted of manufacturing methamphetamine in public housing. Legal Information Institute. “24 CFR § 982.553 - Denial of Admission and Termination of Assistance for Criminals and Alcohol Abusers,” Cornell Law School, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/24/982.553>.

11. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Office of General Counsel Guidance on Application of Fair Housing Act Standards to the Use of Criminal Records by Providers of Housing and Real Estate-Related Transactions* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2016), https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/HUD_OCGUIDAPPFHASTANDCR.PDF.

12. Taber, Niloufer and Jacqueline Altamirano Marin, *Expanding Housing Access for People with Conviction Histories in Michigan: Methodology and Limitations*, Vera Institute of Justice, 2022, <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/housing-access-people-with-conviction-histories-michigan-methodology-limitations.pdf>.

13. HUD’s homelessness response resources, including supportive housing, often prioritize people who qualify as “chronically homeless.” To be deemed “chronically homeless,” per the HUD definition, individuals must have a disability and be experiencing homelessness continuously for 12 months, or cumulatively with four episodes of homelessness, over the course of three years. Institutional stays in jails, hospitals, or treatment facilities for longer than 90 days do not count as time spent homeless. See Housing and Urban Development Exchange, “Definition of Chronic Homelessness,” HUD Exchange, <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/coc-esg-virtual-binders/coc-esg-homeless-eligibility/definition-of-chronic-homelessness/>. The very common occurrence of people moving between homelessness and jails—stays that often exceed 90 days—can make meeting this definition extremely difficult.

14. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Reentry Housing Letter*, 2021, https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PA/documents/SOHUD_reentry_housing_letter.pdf; “HUD Outlines its Action Plan to Remove Unnecessary Barriers to Housing for People with Criminal Records,” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, April 24, 2023, https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/hud_no_23_083.

4. Intervening to Disrupt the Cycle

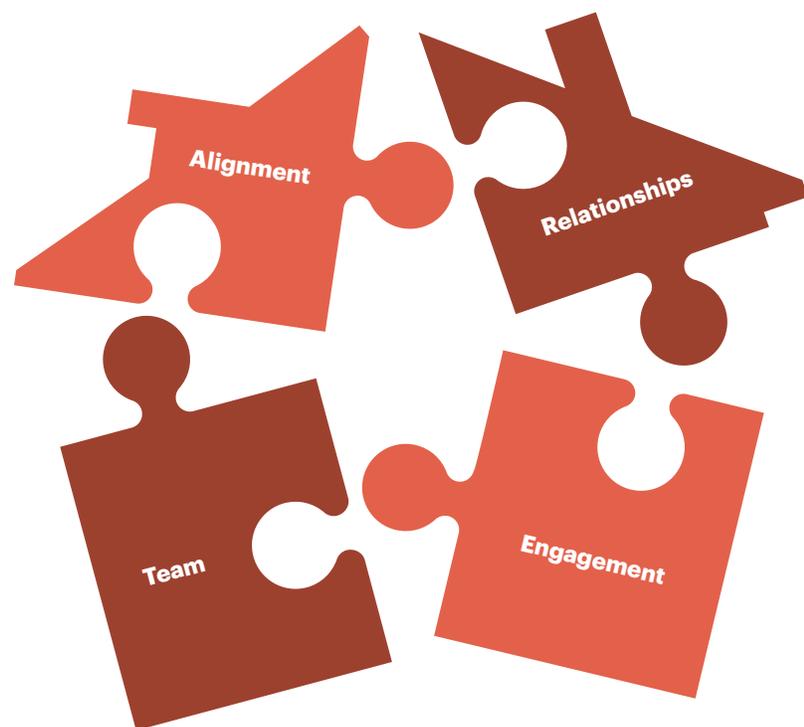
Despite the persistence of the carceral/homelessness cycle, our findings underscored that there are viable strategies that can disrupt this link and mitigate its adverse effects. Practitioners across the United States are actively intervening to enhance the housing stability and overall well-being of individuals involved in the criminal justice system and their communities.

Expanding the supply of affordable housing significantly is crucial for a stable, long-term resolution of these issues. However, even actors without the resources or ability to develop new housing dedicated to justice-involved people can leverage collaborations to make a meaningful impact at the intersection of housing instability and criminal justice involvement. The collaborations we studied—through a program scan, literature review, survey, and interviews—fall broadly into four categories: preventing criminal justice involvement, connecting individuals to existing support, expanding access to housing, and increasing housing supply.

Preventing criminal justice involvement

Interventions in this category aim to prevent the initiation of the housing instability-criminal justice cycle or to stop it for those already caught in the cycle. Programs like King County, Washington’s Law Enforcement-Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program divert people engaged in low-level offenses away from the criminal justice system and into case management and social service programs. King County LEAD is a partnership between law enforcement agencies, behavioral health providers, prosecutorial partners, and community groups that provides, among other things, temporary housing and intensive case management to support permanent housing plans for people who have committed “low-level drug crimes, prostitution, and crimes of poverty.”¹⁵ The long-standing partnership has evolved over time to incorporate more housing supports, including working with the coordinated entry

homelessness response system to give justice-involved people a priority for homelessness prevention resources. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the program leveraged new, flexible federal funding for pandemic response initiatives to develop a model (“Co-LEAD”) pairing temporary hotel-based housing with intensive case management. Similarly, Crisis Intervention Teams (CITs) train law enforcement to identify mental health crises, steering individuals toward mental health services and housing rather than police or jail involvement.¹⁶ Missoula, Montana’s CIT is built on a partnership across law enforcement, medical and first responders, emergency dispatchers, hospital systems, homeless service



15. “Rethinking Public Safety Three Years After George Floyd,” Lisa Daugaard, Jamiles Lartey, and Sasha Cotton, (webinar, USC Annenberg Center for Health Journalism, Los Angeles, CA, May 18, 2023), <https://centerforhealthjournalism.org/our-work/webinars/rethinking-public-safety-three-years-after-george-floyd>.

16. “Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Programs,” National Alliance on Mental Illness, last modified 2024, [https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Crisis-Intervention/Crisis-Intervention-Team-\(CIT\)-Programs](https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Crisis-Intervention/Crisis-Intervention-Team-(CIT)-Programs).

providers, and behavioral health providers, among others. Cross-sector data sharing can make these partnerships more effective by helping agencies identify individuals at the highest risk and make decisions about priorities.

Specialized courts, such as drug treatment courts, mental health courts, and homelessness courts, also play a pivotal role in preventing or limiting incarceration and, thereby, promoting housing stability. These criminal courts offer alternatives to traditional, punitive resolutions and emphasize providing access to rehabilitation and support services for specific populations. In drug treatment courts, individuals with substance abuse issues participate in comprehensive treatment programs, contributing to reduced charges and improved prospects for stable housing upon successful completion. Mental health courts focus on diverting individuals with mental health challenges away from traditional punishment, providing tailored mental health care and support to address underlying issues. Homelessness courts specifically address the unique challenges faced by individuals experiencing homelessness, providing a space to resolve warrants and expunge records while connecting them with housing assistance programs and support services. In some cases, homelessness courts are held in locations like soup kitchens, which are more accessible for people experiencing homelessness.

Some of these courts also support defendants with case management services, which can protect against the destabilizing effects of justice-system involvement by helping to stabilize people in their existing housing or helping them regain housing. In Los Angeles's Community Collaborative Courts, for example, a team of lawyers, mental health clinicians, substance use disorder case workers, and others meet weekly to review caseloads and strategize to address the needs of defendants who have suffered from substance use disorders, homelessness, sexual abuse, or foster care. Overall, these specialized courts represent a shift towards rehabilitative approaches, aiming to prevent incarceration and enhance practitioners' opportunities for housing stability.

Connecting criminal justice-involved people to resources and support

Even when housing and resources are available, people with criminal justice involvement may face impediments to accessing them. The criminal legal system typically ignores housing problems and fails to provide access to supports or interventions to address housing needs.

Practitioners also emphasized the difficulty faced by individuals returning from years of incarceration, noting changes in available resources and the challenge of navigating unfamiliar support systems. One practitioner explained, "The resources they might have known in the past are no longer available or have changed, and it is difficult for them to find out what new resources to look into." Limited access to transportation and technology exacerbates these barriers, leading to frustration, unsuccessful searches for assistance, and preemptive self-screening out of resources.

A diverse range of interventions aims to bridge the gap between criminal justice-involved individuals and available resources. The law enforcement-led diversion and

treatment and diversion court initiatives described above are examples of this approach: they not only look to address the justice-system issues before them but also take the opportunity to address housing needs. Connecting people to the right housing resources takes time, and the earlier programs can intervene to support people in that process, the better. Each point of contact in the justice system process can be such an opportunity, as

One practitioner explained, "The resources they might have known in the past are no longer available or have changed, and it is difficult for them to find out what new resources to look into."

these examples illustrate. Initiatives such as Washington, D.C.'s Reentry Action Network create a centralized clearinghouse of reentry resources, facilitating easier navigation for individuals. In Wichita, Kansas, local outreach teams through Project HOPE connect individuals not only with housing but also with nonprofits that can provide moving assistance and furniture. The Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) provides some people leaving incarceration both with housing vouchers, through voucher

set-asides from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, and with help finding and applying for housing. These efforts contribute to higher success rates in securing housing for MDOC voucher holders compared to other voucher holders, and lower recidivism rates compared to people leaving prison without a voucher.

Some public housing authorities (PHAs) across the nation are stepping up to connect individuals with criminal histories coming to, or returning to, their communities with the resources needed to be successful.¹⁷ Several PHAs reported not only opening up housing to individuals returning from prison, but also providing in-house wraparound services like employment and job training supports, mental health resources, and education opportunities. For example, New Haven, Connecticut's PHA, Elm City Communities, now sets 10 percent of its vouchers aside for people leaving incarceration and provides services spanning from new parent support and work readiness training to end-of-life care. One PHA leader with whom we spoke worked with the Vera Institute of Justice to evaluate their policies and revise them to better support residents with criminal justice involvement, including providing free programming. Partnering with people who themselves have criminal justice involvement can be especially fruitful. In Seattle, a community group run by and for people with lived experience is working with the housing authority to identify ways to more effectively house and reintegrate residents leaving incarceration.

Housing authorities—from jurisdictions as varied as Allegheny County, Pennsylvania; Burlington, North Carolina; New Haven, Connecticut; Seattle, Washington; and Winnebago County, Illinois—have begun to move towards more limited consideration of applicants' criminal records or to holistic admissions processes that consider the totality of an applicant's circumstances.

These interventions underscore the potential to leverage existing services by increasing awareness and smoothing out access, and how advocates have been able to move the needle and build political and institutional will.

Expanding access to housing

Another category of interventions focuses on expanding the ability of justice-impacted people to access existing housing. They typically do this in one of two ways: (1)

combating the formal exclusion of criminal justice-involved individuals from housing, or (2) prioritizing their access to housing or incentivizing landlords to rent to them.

The Fair Chance Housing legislative movement that has been gaining steam in recent years is an example of removing barriers.¹⁸ “Fair chance” laws limit the use of criminal records in tenant screening processes. Many jurisdictions, including New York just this past year, have passed versions of these laws.¹⁹ Colorado's Rental Application Fairness Act restricts landlords from considering most arrest records or convictions more than five years old at the time of a tenant's application.²⁰ However, as with other fair housing laws,

effectiveness may be undermined by a lack of enforcement resources—and prospective tenants who receive housing vouchers may continue to face discrimination on that basis in jurisdictions without source-of-income protections in place.

17. Bae, John, Jacqueline Altamirano Marin, and Margaret diZerega, *Opening Doors, Returning Home: How Public Housing Authorities Across the Country Are Expanding Access for People with Conviction Histories*, Vera Institute of Justice, 2022, <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/opening-doors-returning-home.pdf>.

18. See National Housing Law Project, *Fair Chance Ordinances, An Advocate's Toolkit*, 2019, https://www.nhlp.org/wp-content/uploads/021320_NHLP_FairChance_Final.pdf (see list of existing laws as of 2020 in report appendix).

19. Id.; “We did it!,” Fair Chance for Housing, <https://www.fairchancehousing.org/#:~:text=This%20landmark%20legislation%20will%20help,into%20effect%20January%201%2C%202025>.

20. Colorado General Assembly, *Rental Application Fees Act*, HB 19-1106, 72nd Gen. Assem. 1st Reg. sess., (Colo. 2019), https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2019A/bills/2019a_1106_enr.pdf.

Some PHAs have also worked to reduce barriers to access. Housing authorities—from jurisdictions as varied as Allegheny County, Pennsylvania; Burlington, North Carolina; New Haven, Connecticut; Seattle, Washington; and Winnebago County, Illinois—have begun to move towards more limited consideration of applicants’ criminal records (through shorter lookback periods or exemptions for nonviolent offenses or misdemeanors) or to holistic admissions processes that consider the totality of an applicant’s circumstances.²¹ Efforts to reform PHAs’ screening practices at the state level have met with some success; for example, Illinois passed a new law shortening the “lookback” period to six months, barring PHAs from including criminal convictions older than six months in housing screening.

A number of jurisdictions have taken steps to affirmatively prioritize justice-involved people for privately owned subsidized housing. One set of examples comes from agencies that administer the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, the largest federal subsidy program for housing development. Through LIHTC, administering agencies issue Qualified Allocation Plans (QAPs) that provide the criteria against which developer applications will be evaluated. Recent reforms incentivize affordable housing developers to adopt more inclusive tenant screening practices in order to be eligible or competitive for tax credits.²² Indiana’s QAP, for example, requires property managers of supportive housing projects to implement “low-barrier” tenant screening procedures for criminal justice involvement that, among other things, preclude the consideration of arrests and limit lookback periods to two years for misdemeanors and five years for felonies.²³ However, practitioners again emphasized that these policy reforms must be accompanied by oversight and enforcement from state agencies to ensure meaningful compliance.

While creating new housing to help address the needs of justice-involved people is far from easy, it is an important lever that some places have managed to pull.

Other jurisdictions have implemented incentives to encourage landlords to participate in housing subsidy programs. The City of Wichita, for example, saw a significant increase in landlord participation in its Emergency Housing Voucher Program after introducing sign-on bonuses and damage and termination fees and reduced the number of unused vouchers from roughly 300 to less than 10. (The program is not exclusive to people with justice involvement but serves many voucher holders who belong to that population.) In New Hampshire, the Community Housing Program (CHP) has built a network of landlords willing to rent to people with criminal justice histories. With each placement, CHP enters a contract with the landlord to provide a portion of the rent on a short-term basis, about three months.

Increasing housing supply

Across the board, housing shortages emerged as a challenge and, in many cases, a crisis. While creating new housing to help address the needs of justice-involved people is far from easy, it is an important lever that some places have managed to pull. The Just Home Project, a collaboration between the Urban Institute and local partners in four communities in South Carolina, South Dakota, California, and Oklahoma, addresses this shortage head-on by acquiring or developing new affordable housing. The project uses impact investing funds from the MacArthur Foundation to finance the construction of housing for justice-involved people. In Washington, D.C., nonprofit developer Jubilee Housing also works to provide deeply affordable housing in resource-rich neighborhoods specifically for justice-impacted residents.

Some jurisdictions expand the pool of housing resources available by applying for all potential funding from HUD, including vouchers available through competitive grant opportunities, and using sources like block grant dollars

21. Bae, John, et al., *Opening Doors: How to Develop Reentry Programs Using Examples from Public Housing Authorities*, (Brooklyn, NY: Vera Institute of Justice, 2017).
22. Many of these jurisdictions received assistance from Vera Institute’s Opening Doors to Affordable Housing Initiative. See Bae, John, *Opening Doors to Affordable Housing: The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program and People with Conviction Histories*, Vera Institute of Justice, 2023, <https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/Opening-Doors-to-Affordable-Housing-Report.pdf>.
23. Bae, *Opening Doors to Affordable Housing*.

to generate affordable housing. Others leverage unique partnerships. Two initiatives spearheaded by non-profits are creatively adapting the home-sharing model to expand housing options. Impact Justice's Homecoming Project in California expands the supply of available housing by partnering with homeowners willing to rent spare bedrooms to individuals returning from long-term incarceration. The program screens landlords and tenants and provides ongoing support and coaching to both as needed. The Osborne Association's Kinship Reentry Program in New York City similarly increases opportunities in the existing housing stock by providing subsidies to households who welcome returning family members into their homes. While family support can be critical to success upon reentry, housing a returning relative

places a financial burden on many families. The financial assistance and peer and social services provided through the Kinship Reentry Program solve several problems at once: securing housing for someone in reentry, strengthening familial bonds, and providing financial support to participating families.²⁴ In these and other programs,

intensive case management support and continued engagement with landlords can help create new housing opportunities and ensure successful placements.

Appendix A provides additional detail on these and other collaborations. While not an exhaustive list, it highlights interventions from each category above to show the breadth and depth of innovative partnerships across the country.

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24. Watkins, Matt and Jessica Yager, *Reentry and the Social Compact*, Center for Justice Innovation, 2023, https://www.innovatingjustice.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2023/CJI_ReentrySocialCompact_08042023.pdf.

5. Cross-Sector Collaboration: Challenges and Opportunities for Success

There are many examples of cross-sector coordination to implement creative and strategic policies addressing the housing needs of justice-involved people. These collaborations are happening across the country, in urban and rural areas, in a variety of ways. They help policymakers meet their goals, reduce government spending, and foster safer communities. Yet they are far from the norm. In addition to better understanding these interventions, our project examines why such partnerships are rare, and what enables successful partnerships to get off the ground.

A. The challenges of cross-sector collaboration

Collaborating across government agencies, and particularly across sectors, is challenging. Our findings reinforced previous research outlining barriers to cross-sector collaboration, highlighting issues like political will, resource constraints, data sharing, and other practical challenges that emerge in housing-criminal justice partnerships.²⁵

Insufficient political will

Political will emerged as a key hurdle in our interviews. Practitioners detailed the difficulty of garnering support within and across agencies for interventions to increase housing access for justice-involved individuals. Some attributed this difficulty to stigma or apprehension associated with criminal justice involvement and the resistance to changing entrenched agency practices (encapsulated by one practitioner as “the ‘this is the way we’ve always done it and we’re not going to change’ attitude”). Moreover, in a zero-sum world of scarce housing

resources, criminal justice agencies can struggle to convince housing agencies and property owners to prioritize justice-involved people over others. One practitioner attributed their jurisdiction’s successful collaboration to the community’s dense, tight-knit nature: “When someone is released from prison [here], the other people in the community feel it and are affected when that person reenters society without the tools they need to succeed. [Our] elected officials know they can’t arrest their way to public safety.” This story underscores, however, the pitfalls that exist in more segregated communities, where wealthier residents and their representatives may be insulated from these impacts.

Misaligned incentives

Housing and justice agency incentives and the costs or savings associated with addressing the housing needs of justice-involved people are not always well-aligned. Even when programs offer potential savings by reducing the use of jail and costly emergency services, these savings might not accrue to the sector or agency implementing the program or incurring new costs. This challenge, sometimes called the “wrong pockets problem,”

25. See, e.g., Rossman, Shelli and Jocelyn Fontaine, *Safer Return Demonstration: Implementation Findings from a Research-Based Community Reentry Initiative*, Urban Institute, 2015, <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/56296/2000276-Safer-Return-Demonstration-Impact-Findings-from-the-Research-Based-Community-Reentry-Initiative.pdf>; “Collaborative Comprehensive Case Plans,” The Council of State Governments Justice Center, last modified 2024, <https://projects.csgjusticecenter.org/collaborative-comprehensive-case-plans/implementation/>; Francis, Charles, Thomas Coyne, and Katie Herman, *Reducing Homelessness for People with Behavioral Health Needs Leaving Prisons and Jails*, The Council of State Governments Justice Center, Melville Charitable Trust, 2021, https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Reducing-Homelessness-CA_Final.pdf; Francis, Charles, Joseph Hayashi, and Alexandria Hawkins, *Building Connections to Housing During Reentry*, The Council of State Governments Justice Center, Melville Charitable Trust, 2023, https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Building-Connections-to-Housing-During-Reentry_508.pdf; Goger, Annelies, David J. Harding, and Howard Henderson, *A Better Path Forward for Criminal Justice: Prison Reentry*, The Brookings Institution, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-better-path-forward-for-criminal-justice-prisoner-reentry/>; U.S. Department of Justice, *Coordination to Reduce Barriers to Reentry: Lessons Learned from COVID-19 and Beyond*, 2022, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1497911/download>.

is exacerbated when law enforcement activities and incarceration generate revenue for agencies. Respondents reported that departments of correction (DOCs) have very few incentives to invest in programs or policies that would improve the outcomes of incarcerated people upon release. This led to such egregious practices as, in one example, dropping off a re-entering individual at a bus station on the far edge of town, at night, with nothing but the phone number for a reentry program. In other cases, DOCs made it difficult for outside organizations to connect with prisoners in order to prepare them for their release. One interviewee suggested that recidivism should become a criterion by which prison wardens are evaluated, thus aligning their goals with the future well-being of imprisoned people.

Practitioners frequently characterized bringing landlords, and especially property managers, to the collaborative table as a major challenge. One practitioner said that they “couldn’t make a carrot big enough” to induce landlords to rent to people coming out of incarceration (though other practitioners had some success with landlord incentive programs, see Section IV, “expanding access to housing”). The same practitioner also noted that while prejudice certainly played a role, landlords also had realistic concerns about the economic hardships that returning citizens encounter.

Data sharing barriers

Data sharing is key to making timely referrals between housing and criminal justice agencies and to targeting and measuring the impact of collaborative programs. But housing and criminal justice agencies may not be accustomed to sharing data (such as the names and statuses of individuals cycling through incarceration or shelters) with each other and may resist doing so because of concerns about privacy or a sense of territoriality. One practitioner reported that local law enforcement refused to share arrest data and suspected many of those arrested

were not being referred to a pretrial program designed to divert people from criminal convictions for minor offenses. Even when agencies are willing to share, it is often difficult to clean, merge, and analyze datasets originating from these different systems. Another practitioner described hiring a researcher to create a platform where healthcare, criminal justice, and housing data could speak to each other. The researcher eventually succeeded in accessing each dataset, but because of formatting, was forced to enter data points manually into the platform. This process was neither sustainable nor replicable.

“Even when programs offer potential savings by reducing the use of jail and costly emergency services, these savings might not accrue to the sector or agency implementing the program or incurring new costs.”

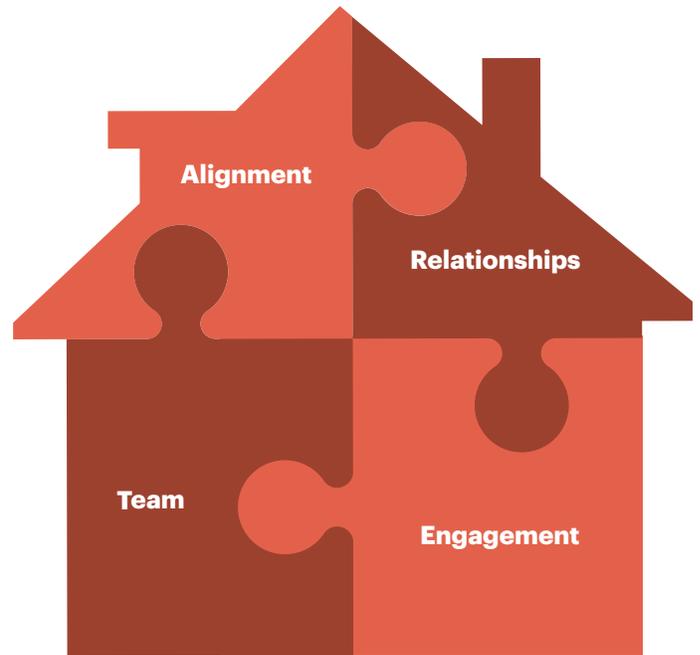
Lack of a common language

Respondents described differences in structure or mindset that made it difficult for housing and criminal justice agencies to communicate, let alone work together. Some in the housing and homelessness space described corrections agencies as impenetrable bureaucracies. One practitioner explained, “The amount of rules and regulations make it difficult to figure out how to make changes in the system, [or even] connect with people before release.” Conversely, criminal justice agencies may not understand HUD or PHA programs, or how to navigate them. Structural differences were described as sometimes exacerbated by gender disparities or bias against other professions. Multiple respondents contrasted the often male-dominated, sometimes macho environment of criminal justice with the more female-dominated world of housing and homelessness services. One practitioner believed that local law enforcement agencies refused to share data with her office in part because she did not belong to the “good ol’ boys network” and they considered the data to be “none of [her] business.” In another case, a police chief was slow to adopt a diversion program because he was “afraid because everyone was saying, ‘don’t take a social worker.’” Another practitioner had to learn to “bring people along with [her] to make [her] ‘voice’ stronger” when reaching out to male leaders in law enforcement.

Successful collaboration often appears to hinge on a single individual with experience in both the housing and criminal justice fields who can build relationships and translate ideas across the two domains. For example, one practitioner began their career as a mental health clinician in the jurisdiction’s jail system, but three years later switched to working for the city government on homelessness initiatives. This dual experience, plus the respondent’s self-described disposition as a “relationship builder,” allowed them to embed a diversion program within the police department where they now “have a lot of influence” and “report directly to [the] chief.”

Limited resources

Insufficient and inflexible funding, inadequate staff capacity, and limited time also impeded collaborations. For many practitioners actively engaged in cross-sector collaboration, facilitating collaborations was not seen as part of their responsibilities and was undertaken on top of that work. Practitioners described working in or with agencies that are “overburdened,” “understaffed,” and “underfunded,” grappling with high caseloads and turnover rates. Several characterized funding streams as ill-suited to facilitating effective collaboration across agencies; one practitioner described “struggling to cobble together the complex array of grants” required to build a collaboration, and another observed that standing up or scaling up collaborations “requires funding that small, rural communities do not have access to.” Practitioners from smaller jurisdictions and/or from criminal justice agencies described the requirements of administering HUD funding as too burdensome or complex. Nonprofit practitioners also noted “turf wars” and territorial behavior among organizations vying for limited resources and grant funding.



B. Key elements of successful collaboration

A primary goal of our interviews was to examine the strategies practitioners employ to navigate barriers to collaboration, exploring effective cross-agency and cross-sector partnerships at the nexus of housing and criminal justice. While the challenge of addressing the housing needs of justice-involved people caused many practitioners to “throw up their hands,” there are also many success stories. Among a diverse array of strategies and approaches, certain principles and factors emerged as shared across successful collaborations, shedding light on how housing and criminal justice agencies have overcome obstacles to collaboration. Perhaps not surprisingly, the lessons that emerged reflect the basic building blocks of effective leadership: having the right people in the right roles aligned to make the sought-after impact. In this context, this translated to Alignment, Stakeholder Engagement, Relationships Matter, and the Right Team.

Alignment: Align goals and incentives for collective gain.

Communities, individuals, and government agencies all stand to benefit from improved housing and criminal justice partnerships, but agency incentives and objectives may not always align (or be seen as aligning) to support this progress. Successful collaborations require the alignment of goals and incentives across housing and criminal justice agencies. This was a central component of every cross-agency collaboration story we heard. In some cases, alignment was created by identifying and articulating pre-existing shared or related goals. In other cases, alignment was achieved by intentional decisions about funding or organizational or programmatic structure.

In many of the cases we explored, housing and criminal justice agencies had compatible goals. Once government partners recognized this, they then built a shared agenda. One successful example is the Corporation for Supportive Housing's Frequent Users Systems Engagement (FUSE) model, which brings corrections departments, homelessness services, and/or health agencies together to identify shared frequent users and then work collaboratively to address their needs. An account of the origins of FUSE described "a conversation in an elevator between then Commissioners of the New York City Departments of Corrections, Martin Horn, and Homeless Services, Linda Gibbs, where they jokingly blamed each other for their respective challenges before pausing to reflect, 'maybe we could work to solve our problems together?'"²⁶ This recognition that what can superficially seem like distinct goals (reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness and reducing the jail population) are really a single, unified goal (addressing the material needs of vulnerable people cycling between shelters and jails) was the jumping-off point for a successful intervention that has now been adopted by dozens of jurisdiction across the country.

In some cases, alignment was created by identifying and articulating pre-existing shared or related goals. In other cases, alignment was achieved by intentional decisions about funding or organizational or programmatic structure.

Another example of underlying, but perhaps unidentified, alignment was found in the story of a reentry program in Michigan that pairs housing vouchers with case management and housing search assistance. As a result, the program achieves a higher voucher utilization rate than the traditional voucher program, creating a sense of alignment between the justice agency and the PHA. Here, the justice agency's interest in stable housing for returning citizens (and its ability to support that process) helped the housing authority achieve its goal of efficient voucher use.

In other instances, leaders create alignment among government stakeholders through program or institutional design. In New Jersey, the Hudson County Department of Housing and Community Reintegration offers an example of this type of alignment. Under the leadership of an elected official who recognized the disjointed nature of local social service funding, Hudson County decided to merge its housing and social service departments. The result is a unified system that oversees emergency services, transitional housing, and longer-term housing assistance under one agency. This integrated approach

has facilitated the identification of the individuals cycling in and out of local jail systems, the determination of appropriate stabilizing interventions, and the connection to housing for individuals leaving jail.

We also came across interventions directly focused on overcoming the "wrong pockets problem," or misalignment whereby a program's benefits accrue to agencies or organizations that do not contribute to its funding. For instance, in the Denver Supportive Housing Social Impact Bond Initiative, the city captures anticipated criminal

justice system savings to reward the private and philanthropic entities that invest in supportive housing. In Impact Justice's Homecoming Project, some of the funding for stipends that go to homeowners in exchange

26. Ryan Moser, "The Lift Up – A Reflection on NYC FUSE," The Supportive Housing Network of NY, October 18, 2018, <https://shnny.org/blog/entry/the-lift-up-a-reflection-on-nyc-fuse-from-ryan-moser/>.

for hosting residents returning from prison now comes from grants from corrections departments rather than housing departments. By giving residents an address to list when reporting for parole and demonstrating a reduction in recidivism, the Homecoming Project was able to convince criminal justice agencies to step outside the box and invest in rental assistance.

Stakeholder engagement: Solve problems and show proof of concept to win partners over.

A hallmark of successful collaborations was identifying creative and strategic solutions to addressing stakeholders' concerns. Once agencies are talking and exploring cross-sector solutions, inevitably other actors (inside and sometimes outside of government) need to be brought along to get to a project at scale. Commitment to testing ideas and providing proof of concept emerged as a common thread used to bring key partners on board. Many practitioners noted how having a successful model to point to helped them convince skeptics. Fostering trust through what one practitioner described as "promises made, promises kept," successful cross-sector partnerships demonstrated a willingness to start small, often through pilot phases, before scaling up based on proven success.

One example is the Northern Illinois Regional Affordable Community Housing (NI ReACH) reentry initiative, which began as a demonstration program in partnership with a research institution. The program focused on studying the housing outcomes of voucher users returning from jail and leveraged an impressive 80 percent success rate from the pilot to advocate for future voucher set-asides. Another practitioner ran an agency that wanted to provide services to justice-involved people. They overcame the skepticism of a local treatment court by offering to work with clients that the court was reluctant to accept and helping to prepare them to participate in court programming. By being flexible and offering a solution that solved a problem for the treatment court (preparing more participants for treatment), the program built trust and, ultimately, a successful partnership.

Commitment to testing ideas and providing proof of concept emerged as a common thread used to bring key partners on board.

In a similar vein, programs like King County LEAD have gained political support by showing their impact on outcomes important to other stakeholders, including those in public safety. Other programs, such as FUSE, have been able to make their case across systems by showing how their work benefits other agencies' client populations. Many practitioners demonstrated the value of incorporating research and evaluation into program design. Programs, including FUSE, the Denver Supportive Housing Social Impact Bond Initiative, and the Just Home Project, have incorporated rigorous evaluation components, which can be extremely helpful in making the case for future investments and expansion.

An ancillary benefit of program evaluations is the impact they can have not only in the studied jurisdiction but also outside of it. Many practitioners we spoke with noted that there needs to be much more broadcasting of successful models in order to spread these ideas. Several practitioners mentioned the value of seeing evidence that a program worked elsewhere; one practitioner from a housing authority described the importance of learning about how other housing authorities had "overcome their fears" of housing people with criminal justice involvement in

driving change in her own agency. Learning networks like the Rural Justice Strategies Collaborative and groups that provide technical assistance in diverse jurisdictions are crucial in disseminating information about successful models across cities.

Finally, we also heard a great deal about building relationships with

non-governmental partners, especially landlords. Engaging landlords to house individuals with criminal records remains a considerable challenge. The tactics used to build those relationships, where successful, were similar to the stories above: making the case for how participation in a program could help solve problems. Some practitioners devised creative—and successful—incentives, such as damage funds, guaranteed rent payments, and "sign-on bonuses." The Housing First program in Wichita, Kansas, incorporates lease terms that provide landlords with an additional month's rent if tenants are re-arrested or oth-

erwise terminate their tenancies. Other landlords were reassured by housing placement programs where the individual being housed was paired with a case manager or other wraparound services.

Relationships matter: Foster individual relationships as catalysts.

Our interviews highlighted the significance of relationships in fostering the trust and common understanding needed for successful collaborations. Especially when working across large bureaucracies, this was the universal experience. Bureaucracies don't talk to each other, but people do. As one practitioner put it, "It's really easy to say, 'no' to...a system. It's really hard to say, 'no,' to a person who is standing in front of you." After learning that people returning from prison were being excluded from voucher waitlists, this practitioner, who worked in a reentry program, sought out the individual at their local housing agency responsible for that decision. Through a direct conversation, her initial assumption that the policy was based on prejudice was proven wrong; she came to see that the policy was an attempt to triage the allocation of a very limited resource. This conversation resulted in the housing policymaker's decision to dedicate a different pool of vouchers to the reentry program.

This story and others we heard underscore the strategic role of relationships in overcoming entrenched positions. Multiple practitioners pointed out that decision-makers were more receptive to new ideas from people they knew and had worked with. Individual relationships thus created windows of opportunity for program or policy changes. These relationships could also be helpful in bringing actors who might otherwise be uninterested or unmotivated—such as landlords and property managers—to the table. One practitioner was able to gain access to rental units for voucher holders in a particular market only after making a personal connection with someone on the board of a local property management company. Others described the importance of having dedicated liaisons to interact with landlords:

As one practitioner put it, "It's really easy to say, 'no' to... a system. It's really hard to say, 'no,' to a person who is standing in front of you."

as one practitioner working in a local housing department put it, a landlord "may not trust the client, but they trust me."

The importance of relationships in successful cross-sector partnerships is one aspect of collaboration that might be more manageable in smaller or rural jurisdictions. One practitioner working in a rural court system called it "one of the superpowers of being rural...that everybody knows everybody." Another from a small housing authority described the advantage of knowing local officials and service providers by name.

Importantly, bias can create barriers to forming individual relationships of this kind. More than one practitioner talked about how gender had been an impediment in male-dominated criminal justice fields to developing the relationships needed to advance innovative collaborations.

The right team: Put the right people in the right roles.

As we explored the nature of these programs and partnerships, most practitioners discussed the leadership and composition of teams as critical to success for championing new initiatives, policy design, and on-the-ground implementation. Three factors related to collaborative teams emerged as important to the success of partnerships and service interventions.

First, the unique insights of people who have personally navigated the challenges of housing instability and criminal justice involvement were invaluable. Several practitioners created a culture and practice of recruiting individuals with lived experience to roles at every level of their organizations. Others reported working with outside councils or advisory boards made up of people with lived experience who review program policies and procedures. (One practitioner cautioned, however, that these advisory boards and councils must be given true oversight capabilities to be effective.) One PHA partnered with an organization founded and led

by formerly incarcerated individuals to spearhead the review of their admissions policies concerning people with justice involvement.

When people with lived experience are meaningful partners in collaboration, they provide a deeper understanding of the issues at hand, resulting in better policy. They also help policymakers understand the small details that can make a significant difference in implementation and the practical import and potential unintended consequences of policy choices. In one example, staff with lived experience understood that budgeting classes would not be of much use to program participants with no income and helped program leaders recognize the need to make classes optional. In the case of Impact Justice's Homecoming Project, many of the homeowners who signed up to offer housing to program participants had never interacted with someone who had been incarcerated. By partnering with Root and Rebound, an organization led by a formerly incarcerated person, Impact Justice was able to better support homeowners in navigating these new interactions.

Similarly, peer support specialists play another critical role described by several practitioners as vital for working with justice-involved populations. As part of Project HOPE in Wichita, Kansas, as well as Missoula, Montana's CIT, peer support specialists are able to relate to program participants and ease the transition to release in a way that people without experience of justice involvement could not. Practitioners also emphasized that peer support can be an emotionally challenging job and that specialists should be provided with the training and support needed to perform their roles successfully and sustainably.

Second, none of these programs would be possible without direct service workers providing quality interventions on the ground, often from within multi-disciplinary, multi-agency teams. Frontline staff trained to handle complex situations with sensitivity and competence play a pivotal role in ensuring the quality of interven-

tions. Many collaborative efforts relied on intervention teams composed of behavioral health specialists, social workers, case managers, peer-support specialists, and, sometimes, law enforcement officers. One practitioner specifically stated that depending on a single social worker to address their program participants' wide array of needs was a model bound to fail. Another found that the multi-agency team structure helped to build relationships across behavioral health and law enforcement agencies. These relationships gave team members new perspectives on how to design interventions, improved outcomes for program participants, and promoted the longevity of the program by creating buy-in among team

members. Supporting these direct service staff through continuous training, adequate resources, and recognition of their essential role is crucial for the sustainability and effectiveness of these programs.

Finally, many successful partnerships were driven by local leaders who challenged conventional practices and were persistent in driving change. These leaders

shared a deep concern for their communities, a recognition of the humanity of justice-involved people, and tenacity in pursuing out-of-the-box ideas. They noticed that law enforcement officers were responding to people in mental health crises by arresting them instead of helping them secure treatment or housing, that homelessness and emergency health systems were serving the same clients without communicating with one another, or that justice-impacted people were being unjustifiably denied access to public housing. To these leaders, it was unacceptable for any person to fall through the cracks. Despite meager supports, entrenched systems and practices, stigma, and political challenges, these local changemakers persevered in securing housing and other forms of assistance for the individuals passing through their systems. These leaders often assumed these responsibilities on top of their full-time jobs, underscoring the need for enhanced support for coordination roles at the local level.

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Conclusion

This project sheds light on the hurdles faced by state and local government stakeholders in breaking the negative and reinforcing cycles of housing instability and criminal justice involvement and reveals inspiring examples of effective partnerships between housing and criminal justice agencies. Appendix A highlights a range of innovative programs that demonstrate how practitioners across the country are leveraging partnerships to improve housing outcomes for people with justice involvement.

We found that political will remains a central challenge and that progress is often hindered by stigma, fear, and resistance to change within agencies. Resource constraints, including funding limitations, understaffing, and high caseloads, further impede collaboration efforts. Successful collaborations that overcome these barriers share several common characteristics, building from productive relationships among agency staff and deep investment in team members to allow for better alignment of agency incentives and goals. As practitioners continue to grapple with these challenges, opportunities for collaboration and innovation arise. Leveraging new funding streams, building evidence through pilot programs, and advocating for policy changes can contribute to disrupting the prevailing cycle. Moreover, the insights shared by practitioners highlight the importance of learning networks and information-sharing platforms to disseminate successful models and strategies across jurisdictions.

By designing policies that acknowledge and address how housing instability and criminal justice involvement reinforce one another, communities can move towards more equitable and just outcomes for the low-income people of color caught up in this cycle. Moving forward, the experiences and lessons learned from practitioners nationwide should guide the development of future interventions, program designs, and research initiatives.

This project also highlights the resources and support needed to strengthen cross-sector partnerships. Philanthropic partners, technical assistance providers, and HUD can all play a role in helping practitioners identify and access flexible funding streams and data that can shed light on local needs, resources, and opportunities to better connect people to housing and services. While challenges persist, the successes documented in this project demonstrate that positive change is happening in communities across the country with replicable partnership models and elements. The collective effort to break the cycle requires continuous commitment, innovative thinking, and a shared vision of a society where housing stability and justice are accessible to all.

Appendix A: Housing and Criminal Justice Solutions

This appendix provides a snapshot of programs addressing the housing-criminal justice nexus. While not exhaustive, it illustrates the wide range of approaches housing and criminal justice agencies and their partners are taking to disrupt the cycle of housing instability and criminal justice involvement for program participants

Program	State	Geography Covered	Form of Intervention	Participating Agencies	Program Description
<u>Accountability Court Program</u>	Georgia	State	Preventing CJ involvement	Council of Accountability Court Judges, treatment and case management service providers	The Georgia Accountability Court Program was established to “provide effective alternatives to sentencing for nonviolent offenders and reduce the state’s prison population.” The program includes felony drug courts, DUI courts, mental health courts, family treatment courts, and veterans treatment courts.
<u>Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD)</u>	Washington	County	Preventing CJ involvement	ACLU of Washington, King County & Seattle City Councils, Seattle Mayor’s Office, King County Sheriff’s Office, King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, Seattle City Attorney’s Office, Purpose Dignity Action Seattle Police Department, Recovery Navigator Program	Developed by officials in King County, Washington, LEAD is a model that promotes safety, equity, and harm reduction by reimagining law enforcement and community response to low-level illegal behavior. LEAD relies on coordination “among police, prosecutors, case managers and neighborhood leaders,” and prioritizes “community-based care and coordination,” over incarceration for people who commit “law violations due to their behavioral health challenges and income instability.” LEAD has been replicated in multiple jurisdictions across the country.
<u>Drug courts</u>	National	Multi-state	Preventing CJ involvement	Judges, attorneys, treatment professionals, other community partners	According to All Rise, a nonprofit focused on justice system innovation, “adult drug courts are an alternative to incarceration that combine public health and public safety approaches to connect people involved in the justice system with individualized, evidence-based treatment and recovery support services.”
<u>Homeless Court</u>	California	County	Preventing CJ involvement	Homeless Court Program	The Homeless Court Program allows homeless individuals who have misdemeanor offenses to credit participation in homeless service programs against their charges, thereby diverting them from incarceration.
<u>Pre-Arrest Diversion of Homeless Individuals</u>	New York	City	Preventing CJ involvement	Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, New York Police Department, Department of Homeless Services, New York County District Attorney’s Office, New York City Transit, Metropolitan Transportation Authority, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Bowery Residents Committee, Vera Institute of Justice, New York Academy of Medicine	As part of a cross-sector collaboration, NYPD officers are trained to relocate individuals sleeping in the city’s subway system to housing and health services rather than arrest them.

Program	State	Geography Covered	Form of Intervention	Participating Agencies	Program Description
<u>Street Outreach Court Detroit</u>	Michigan	City	Preventing CJ involvement	36th District Court of Detroit, Street Democracy, Capuchin Soup Kitchen, Wayne County Executive's Office, Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, City of Detroit Law Department, Wayne County Sheriff's Office, City of Detroit Municipal Parking Department, Detroit Action Commonwealth, St. Leo's Soup Kitchen, Southwest Economic Solutions, Neighborhood Legal Services, Volunteers of America Michigan	Street Outreach Court Detroit (SOCD) is a Specialty Court aimed at addressing the root causes of homelessness, while resolving the legal matters of homeless individuals with pending cases in the 36th District Court. SOCD works with relevant "government agencies, nonprofit, and legal organizations."
<u>Diversion Hub</u>	Oklahoma	City	Preventing CJ involvement Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Homeless Alliance, City Care, TEEM, Heartline, OCARTA, Oklahoma Human Services, Upward Transitions, and other community partners; Oklahoma City Community Foundation, Arnall Family Foundation, Kirkpatrick Family Fund, founding Advisory Council (law enforcement, jail administrators, judges, Public Defender's Office, District Attorney)	According to the Diversion Hub's website, "Diversion Hub aims to fill gaps in the criminal legal system by helping individuals emerge successfully on the other side of their involvement with the judicial process, and to ultimately reduce the pressure on the Oklahoma jail and the prison populations. Oklahoma has one of the highest incarceration rates in the country, with jail populations frequently over capacity. Recent criminal justice trends have spurred reforms to move these individuals from jails to diversion programs. Through these programs, individuals receive life-stabilizing resources and assistance navigating a complex court system. This enables them to return to work, their families, and to become part of the community."
<u>Homeless Outreach Teams</u>	Kansas	City	Preventing CJ involvement	Wichita Police Department	Wichita developed a Homeless Outreach Team to address problems with homeless individuals or groups without relying on incarceration. According to their guidelines, "The Wichita Police Department recognizes that homelessness is not a crime."
<u>Missoula Crisis Intervention Team</u>	Montana	County	Preventing CJ involvement	Gallatin County Sheriff's Office, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the Division of Addictive and Mental Disorders, other state and local agencies	Using a Crisis Intervention Team model, the Gallatin County Sheriff's Office partnered with local and national mental health agencies to train law enforcement on better managing mental health crises and developed a Mobile Crisis Response Team to reduce law enforcement involvement in mental health emergencies.

Program	State	Geography Covered	Form of Intervention	Participating Agencies	Program Description
<u>Project HOPE</u>	Kansas	City	Preventing CJ involvement	City of Wichita Council, Newman University, WorkForce Alliance, United Methodist Open Door, Substance Abuse Center of Kansas, Emprise Bank, Key Construction, Lane Enterprises (McDonalds), WaterWalk, United States Attorney's Office, Project Safe Neighborhood, Project Guardian, the National Public Safety Partnerships	Project HOPE is an initiative in Wichita, Kansas that aims to reduce crime and divert people experiencing homelessness from incarceration in targeted areas of the city. The project is place-based, data-driven, community-oriented, and aims to build partnerships with local businesses and service providers.
<u>Coming Home Directory</u>	Massachusetts	State	Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Dismas House of Massachusetts, the Commonwealth Green Low Income Housing Coalition, Worcester Common Ground	Coming Home Worcester and Coming Home Metro West are directories of important local resources that connect returning citizens to housing and other important services.
<u>Housing Stability for Youth in Courts (H-SYNC)</u>	Washington	County	Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	University of Washington Collab, Snohomish County, Kitsap County	The H-SYNC model identifies youth within juvenile court systems who are currently experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness and refers them and their families to appropriate services.
<u>Ready4Release</u>	Florida	State	Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Operation New Hope, Florida Department of Corrections	Operation New Hope collaborates with Florida's Department of Corrections to provide pre-release services in 29 correctional facilities. Operation New Hope facilitates adequate housing for re-entering community members, as well as transportation and job training.
<u>Reentry Action Network</u>	District of Columbia	City	Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	DC Reentry Action Network, DC Executive Office of the Mayor: Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants	The Reentry Action Network is a network of reentry service providers and resources that connects returning DC residents to essential services like housing, education, employment training, legal services, health care, and transitional services.
<u>Second Chance Program</u>	Arizona	County	Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	A New Leaf	People being released from prison and previously justice-involved individuals in Maricopa County, AZ receive housing assistance, employment assistance, connection to resources, and ongoing support and guidance through A New Leaf, a non-profit agency.
<u>Emergency and Transitional Housing Program</u>	Louisiana	State	Expanding access to existing housing	Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections	Using funding from the larger Justice Reinvestment Act of 2017, the Emergency and Transitional Housing Programs provide funding for up to six months of housing to people exiting prisons or on parole.
<u>Fair Chance laws</u>	National	Multi-state	Expanding access to existing housing	State and local legislatures	Fair chance laws limit landlords' consideration of prospective tenants' past criminal justice involvement in the housing application process.

Program	State	Geography Covered	Form of Intervention	Participating Agencies	Program Description
<u>Family Re-entry Program</u>	Delaware	State	Expanding access to existing housing	Delaware State Housing Authority, Dover Housing Authority, New Castle County Housing Authority, Newark Housing Authority, Wilmington Housing Authority, the Delaware Department of Correction, the Delaware Center for Justice	In Delaware's Family Reentry Program, returning citizens can live with family in Public Housing Authority properties on a one- or two-year basis, with the option of becoming a permanent part of the lease.
<u>Hope House NOLA</u>	Louisiana	City	Expanding access to existing housing	Operation Restoration and The Ladies of Hope Ministries	Operation Restoration, a non-profit focused on reentry, partners with The Ladies of Hope ministries to provide transitional housing for women exiting incarceration.
<u>Maryland Opportunities through Vouchers Experiment (MOVE)</u>	Maryland	State	Expanding access to existing housing	Maryland Department of Public Safety & Correctional Services, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development	As part of a randomized control trial, participants exiting Maryland prisons randomly received six months of free housing either within or away from their home jurisdiction. Recidivism rates were lower for people who moved jurisdictions than those who did not. Additionally, recidivism rates were lower for individuals who received free housing versus those who did not.
<u>Michigan Prisoner Reentry Program</u>	Michigan	State	Expanding access to existing housing	Michigan State Housing Development Authority, Michigan Department of Corrections	The Michigan State Housing Development Authority and the Michigan Department of Correction collaborated to reserve a pool (200-300) of Housing Choice Vouchers for parolees who meet requirements.
<u>Offender Re-Entry Housing Program</u>	Vermont	County	Expanding access to existing housing	Burlington Housing Authority, Vermont Department of Corrections	The Vermont Department of Corrections refers returning citizens to the Burlington Housing Authority, which places them in one of their rental apartments or provides a rental subsidy to participating landlords. BHA and VDOC also partner to reassure landlords by funding security deposits and first month's rent for these subsidized apartments.
<u>Opening Doors, public housing rule reform</u>	National	Multi-state	Expanding access to existing housing	Public housing authorities, Vera Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance	The Opening Doors initiative is a partnership between the Vera Institute of Justice and 22 public housing authorities (PHAs) across the country. The project is funded by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, and began in 2017. The Vera Institute of Justice works with PHAs to "increase access to public housing for people with conviction histories," often by revising their administrative plans.
<u>Reentry Housing Assistance Program</u>	Washington	State	Expanding access to existing housing	Washington State Department of Corrections	The Reentry Division of the Washington Department of Corrections manages the Housing Assistance Program, which refers returning citizens to housing opportunities and, in some cases, provides up to \$700 in housing funding for up to six months post-release.

Program	State	Geography Covered	Form of Intervention	Participating Agencies	Program Description
<u>Rental Assistance for Alaskans on Parole or Probation and Youth Leaving Foster Care</u>	Alaska	State	Expanding access to existing housing	Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, Alaska Department of Corrections	Alaskans on parole or probation earning less than 60% AMI can apply for Housing Choice Vouchers through their parole officers.
<u>San Diego, California Program</u>	California	State and County	Expanding access to existing housing		In San Diego, California, state and county officials partner to align policies and funding to increase housing opportunities for individuals with complex behavioral health needs leaving prison or jail and facing homelessness.
<u>Second Chance Voucher Program</u>	Pennsylvania	City	Expanding access to existing housing	Philadelphia Housing Authority, United States Probation Office (Eastern District of Pennsylvania)	Through this program, the Philadelphia Housing Authority reserves a pool of housing vouchers for returning citizens participating in the U.S. Probation Office-Eastern District of Pennsylvania's Supervision to Aid Reentry program. Returning citizens receive up to two years of private housing with voucher support through the program, which began with 10 vouchers in 2015 and was expanded to 30 vouchers in 2022.
<u>Co-LEAD</u>	Washington	City	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	King County Regional Homelessness Authority, Purpose Dignity Action, Healthier Here, City of Seattle	Building off of the LEAD model, CoLEAD provides temporary lodging in local hotels and intensive case management to address what their partners see as the root cause of illegal activity amongst their residents: "unmet behavioral health needs and/or income instability."
<u>Dismas House of Indiana</u>	Indiana	Parole District	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Dismas House of Indiana	Dismas House of Indiana places returning citizens in a home with local college and graduate students. It also provides transitional services to returning citizens and aims to build community.
<u>Family Re-entry Pilot Program</u>	New York	City and Federal	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	New York City Housing Authority, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, New York City Department of Homeless Services, Vera Institute of Justice, Corporation for Supportive Housing	New York City's Family Re-entry Pilot Program enabled returning citizens with families living in NYCHA buildings to reside with their families in these apartments on a two-year basis. The program also provided re-entry services to these individuals.

Program	State	Geography Covered	Form of Intervention	Participating Agencies	Program Description
Frequent Users Services Enhancement (FUSE) (New York)	New York	City	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Corporation for Supportive Housing, New York City Department of Homeless Services, New York City Department of Corrections, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, New York City Housing Authority, ten non-profit housing and social service providers	New York's FUSE program provided supportive housing to roughly 200 individuals cycling between jails and homeless shelters. This included individuals who had at least four jail stays and four shelter stays in the five years before admission.
FUSE Expansion Project	Nevada	County	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Clark County Social Service, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department's Detention Services Division	This collaboration between Clark County Social Service and the Las Vegas Police Department identified frequent users of jails, hospitals, and psychiatric facilities and provided housing and supportive services to them.
Going Home Hawai'i	Hawaii	State	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Hawai'i Island Going Home Consortium, consisting of more than 50 public and private entities	Going Home Hawai'i provides reentry and recovery housing programs for individuals leaving incarceration and who may be recovering from substance abuse, as well as those involved in the criminal justice system who are in need of safe housing.
Hennepin County FUSE	Minnesota	County	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	St. Stephen's Human Services, Minneapolis/Hennepin County Office to End Homelessness	Frequent users of single adult shelters and the criminal justice system are provided with affordable housing and case management services.
Home for Good: Supportive Housing	Alaska	City	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	United Way of Anchorage	Home for Good provides supportive housing, including services to connect people with health care, treatment, and employment services. The goal is to keep individuals housed and out of emergency rooms and jails. Home for Good also engages landlords who rent to people with criminal histories and mental illness.
Inside Out Reentry Community	Iowa	County	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Inside Out Reentry Community	In 2023, Inside Out Reentry Community opened a home for six men returning from incarceration. They plan to open a home for women and more housing in the future.
Jubilee Housing Reentry Housing Initiative Program	District of Columbia	City	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Jubilee Housing	Jubilee Housing operates two reentry homes in Washington, D.C., and provides residents with supportive housing and wrap-around services.

Program	State	Geography Covered	Form of Intervention	Participating Agencies	Program Description
<u>Just in Reach Pay for Success</u>	California	County	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Corporation for Supportive Housing, Evident Change, Los Angeles County Chief Executive, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, National Council on Crime and Delinquency, RAND Corporation, UnitedHealthcare	Los Angeles' Just in Reach Pay for Success program utilized investor funding to provide supportive housing with intensive case management services to individuals with disabilities and histories of homelessness exiting the LA County jail system. With the goal of achieving housing stability and reducing recidivism, LA County repaid the investors with 'success payments,' relying on a performance-based contract.
<u>Justice Involved Supportive Housing</u>	New York	City	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Fortune Society, CAMBA, Urban Pathways	Building off of the FUSE model, Justice-Involved Supportive Housing aims to connect the highest users of jails and shelters with permanent supportive housing. In 2017, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice announced that they had successfully provided JISH to 97 individuals.
<u>New Beginnings</u>	New York	City	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Hudson Link	Hudson Link, a non-profit that focuses on educational programs in New York state prisons, manages two transitional housing homes in Ossining, NY, and is working on opening two more homes. Recently incarcerated residents are matched with local case managers who help them find employment, social services, and permanent housing.
<u>Project 25</u>	California	County	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	United Way of San Diego County, St. Vincent de Paul Village, Telecare Corporation, County of San Diego	In this pilot program implemented in San Diego County between 2011 and 2013, 36 individuals who were the most frequent users of county hospitals, homeless shelters, and jails were provided housing and supportive services. "The program...showed a dramatic reduction of 67% in total costs comparing the base year of 2010 to 2013."
<u>Re-Entry Housing Initiative</u>	Maine	State	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network, Maine Department of Corrections	The Maine Prisoner Re-Entry Network connects returning citizens with a variety of resources including housing.
<u>Reentry Partnership Housing</u>	Georgia	State	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Georgia Department of Community Supervision, Georgia Department of Corrections, Council of Accountability Court Judges	Certified RPH providers provide these individuals with stable housing and food access. The goal of the RPH Program is to provide short-term housing for up to six months of assistance to help stabilize an individual's reentry process and enhance his or her ability to remain crime-free. Under Georgia's Reentry Partnership Housing Program, certified providers provide housing and food access to individuals who have either been released from prison or jail or who are participating in a Georgia Accountability Court - like felony drug court, mental health court, veterans court, or family court.

Program	State	Geography Covered	Form of Intervention	Participating Agencies	Program Description
<u>Release to Rent</u>	Missouri	City	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Criminal Justice Ministry	Criminal Justice Ministry's Release to Rent programs "provide an apartment and six to 12 months of supportive housing and wrap-around services to the most vulnerable."
<u>Residential Program</u>	Kentucky	City	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	New Legacy Reentry Corporation	The New Legacy Reentry Corporation is a faith-based community organization that provides a two-year residential program for returning male citizens, focused on breaking the cycle of chronic recidivism.
<u>Returning Home Ohio</u>	Ohio	State	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Corporation for Supportive Housing, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation	Returning Home Ohio provides supportive housing to Ohioans exiting state prison at risk of homelessness and who have a disability. Returning Home Ohio began as a pilot program in 2007 and became permanent in 2012.
<u>Social Impact Bond (SIB)/Frequent Users Services Enhancement (FUSE)</u>	Colorado	City	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Corporation for Supportive Housing, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, Colorado Division of Housing, Denver Continuum of Care, Denver Housing Authority, Mental Health Center of Denver	Denver's Social Impact Bond "Pay for Success" model used investor funding for housing and supportive services for homeless individuals with significant justice system involvement. Investors were repaid with public funding based on success criteria.
<u>Transitional Housing</u>	New York	City	Expanding access to existing housing Connecting CJ-involved people to resources and support	Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, Women's Community Justice Project, the Fortune Society, Exodus Transitional Community, Housing Works	Starting with a 2018 program focused on women exiting the criminal justice system, this program was later expanded to men with behavioral health needs. During the pandemic, the city utilized hotels to provide emergency housing for individuals exiting the criminal justice system and connected them with social services. "By Fiscal Year 2023, the City will invest \$50 million per year to provide approximately 1,000 units of transitional housing administered by a network of non-profit organizations."
<u>Fairfield County, Ohio Program</u>	Ohio	County	Increasing housing supply		In Fairfield County, Ohio, county officials are conducting a readiness assessment and working with rural non-profit agencies to develop affordable housing for people released from incarceration.
<u>Hope Village</u>	Nebraska	City	Increasing housing supply	Bridges to Hope	Bridges to Hope, a Nebraska non-profit, is building a tiny home village to provide permanent supportive housing to 20 returning citizens.

Program	State	Geography Covered	Form of Intervention	Participating Agencies	Program Description
<u>Just Home Project</u>	California, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota	County	Increasing housing supply	MacArthur Foundation, Urban Institute, partner agencies in Tulsa, Oklahoma; San Francisco, California; Charleston, South Carolina; and Minnehaha, South Dakota	The Just Home Project, a partnership between the MacArthur Foundation and the Urban Institute, provided impact-investing funding and technical assistance to four communities—Charleston County, South Carolina; Minnehaha County, South Dakota; the City and County of San Francisco, California; and Tulsa County, Oklahoma—to build or acquire housing to serve populations affected by housing instability and incarceration.
<u>Kinship Reentry Program</u>	New York	City	Increasing housing supply	Osborne Association	The Kinship Reentry Program provides subsidies, financial literacy training, peer support, and case management services to families welcoming returning family members into their homes.
<u>The Homecoming Project</u>	California	Multi-city	Increasing housing supply	Impact Justice	The Homecoming Project pays homeowners to host a returning citizen in their home.

Appendix B: Funding Housing for People with Criminal Justice History

Funding is a persistent challenge for many cross-sector projects, due in part to the complexities of programs offered at the federal, state, and local levels. As illustrated in Sections III and IV, these may include burdensome application requirements, local agency silos, and inharmonious eligibility requirements among federal agencies. Below is a non-comprehensive selection of funding sources that may support solutions at the housing-criminal justice nexus, identified from a national program scan and interviews with 32 practitioners.

Public Funds

Federal: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Section 115 Medicaid Waiver Programs: Federal Medicaid funding typically cannot be used for housing expenses. However, states can apply for Section 1115 Medicaid waivers to support demonstration projects that suspend specific Medicaid guidelines.²⁷ This opens up the opportunity for states to create programs that use Medicaid dollars to fund housing costs for those seeking healthcare.²⁸ In 2023, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced new guidance to help states increase the accessibility of Medicaid programs and funds to those soon to be released from jails and prisons.²⁹ Some states are using this flexibility to address housing needs as a social determinant of health.

- **The California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) Program** expands and coordinates care provided under Medi-Cal, the state's implementation of Medicaid. Beginning in July 2023, Medi-Cal can provide up to six months of housing for individuals with high medical or behavioral health needs who are exiting a correctional facility and who would otherwise be homeless.³⁰
- New York State's **Medicaid Redesign Team Waiver Amendment** expands the accessibility of Medicaid programs to incarcerated individuals 30 days before their release.³¹ These programs include discharge planning services and medication management support. The amendment also aims to improve housing services for people experiencing homelessness by establishing a transitional housing program targeted to those who have lived in an institutional setting for 90 days or more.

Federal: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

HUD awards several grants to states and localities to support housing construction, affordability, and access. These include the **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**, the **Continuum of Care (CoC)**, the **Housing Choice Voucher**, and the **Public Housing** programs, among many others.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG): HUD awards CDBG dollars annually to states, cities, and counties to provide flexible funds for urban development and increased economic opportunity for people with low and moderate incomes. Permissible grant activities include property acquisition, public service provision, and some forms of new housing construction.³²

27. "About Section 1115 Demonstrations," Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, accessed January 31, 2024, <https://www.medicare.gov/medicaid/section-1115-demonstrations/about-section-1115-demonstrations/index.html>.

28. Reyneri, Dori Glanz. "How States Can Use Medicaid to Address Housing Costs." Shelterforce, June 5, 2023. <https://shelterforce.org/2023/06/05/how-states-can-use-medicare-to-address-housing-costs/>.

29. "HHS Releases New Guidance to Encourage States to Apply for New Medicaid Reentry Section 1115 Demonstration Opportunity to Increase Health Care for People Leaving Carceral Facilities," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, last modified April 17, 2023, <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2023/04/17/hhs-releases-guidance-to-encourage-states-to-apply-for-medicare-reentry-section-1115-demonstration-opportunity-to-increase-health-care.html>.

30. California Department of Housing and Community Services, Medi-Cal Community Supports Policy Guide, July 2023, <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Documents/MCQMD/DHCS-Community-Supports-Policy-Guide.pdf>.

31. New York State Department of Health Office of Health Insurance Programs, New York State Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT) Waiver Amendment, 2022, https://www.health.ny.gov/health_care/medicaid/redesign/med_waiver_1115/docs/2022-09-02_final_amend_request.pdf.

32. "Community Development Block Grant Program," U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, last modified January 17, 2024, https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/cdbg.

Continuum of Care (CoC) Program: Continuums of Care are regional networks of homeless service providers and local government stakeholders. HUD distributes CoC funding to support coordinated approaches to preventing and ending homelessness. CoCs can fund permanent supportive housing through long-term subsidies for housing and services, usually reserved for those who have a disability and have experienced homelessness for an extended period of time (“chronically homeless”). CoCs can also provide time-limited rental support to help those experiencing homelessness achieve housing stability through rapid rehousing programs.³³

Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs): Low-income households can receive rental subsidies for private-market housing through HCVs. Funding for the voucher program falls extremely short of demand: only a fourth of the households eligible for rental assistance receive it.³⁴ While HUD funds vouchers, the program is administered by local housing agencies, some of which have additional flexibility on the access and use of these vouchers due to their participation in employment-based demonstration programming.³⁵ All local housing agencies have some amount of discretion to prioritize households for vouchers.

Public Housing: HUD funds government-owned and -operated rental housing for low-income families through its public housing program. Rents are calculated based on household income and, similar to Housing Choice Vouchers, local housing agencies have the ability to establish their own selection preferences for tenants.³⁶

- **Elm City Communities**, New Haven, Connecticut’s public housing authority, sets aside roughly 10 percent of housing vouchers they administer for those returning from jails and prisons.

Federal: Internal Revenue Service

Low-Income Housing Tax Credit: The federal government allocates a set number of federal income-tax credits to each state annually to award as incentives to developers to offset the cost of developing and rehabilitating income-restricted affordable housing. State housing finance agencies then distribute tax credits among different projects according to requirements and priorities they define in their Qualified Action Plans (QAPs).³⁷ Some states have used QAPs to incentivize the accessibility of affordable housing to those with criminal justice backgrounds.

- **Indiana’s QAP** limits the lookback periods that can be used in tenant screenings for criminal justice background (two years for misdemeanors, five years for felonies).³⁸
- **Georgia’s QAP** stipulates that LIHTC-supported projects cannot reject an applicant for housing based on arrests. Additionally, an applicant’s conviction history can only form the basis for rejection if it suggests that the individual may pose a risk to the safety of other tenants.³⁹

Federal: U.S. Department of Justice

Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Programs: The Bureau administers funds to state and local governments through a variety of programs intended to “combat violent and drug-related crime and help improve the criminal justice system.”⁴⁰ Multiple jurisdictions have found innovative ways to align BJA programs to address the housing needs of people returning from incarceration.

- The **City of Wichita’s Project HOPE** uses funds from BJA’s Innovations in Community-Based Crime Reduction Program to provide housing assistance, case management, and peer support to individuals experiencing homelessness in an effort to reduce violent crime in Wichita’s urban core.⁴¹

33. “Continuum of Care (CoC) Program Eligibility Requirements,” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, accessed January 31, 2024, <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/coc-program-eligibility-requirements/>.

34. Acosta, Sonya and Erik Gartland, “Families Wait Years for Housing Vouchers Due to Inadequate Funding,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, July 22, 2021, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/families-wait-years-for-housing-vouchers-due-to-inadequate-funding>.

35. “Moving to Work (MTW) Demonstration Program,” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, accessed January 31, 2024, <https://www.hud.gov/mtw>.

36. “HUD’s Public Housing Program,” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, accessed January 31, 2024, https://www.hud.gov/topics/rental_assistance/phprog.

37. “What is the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit and how does it work?” Tax Policy Center, accessed January 31, 2024, <https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/briefing-book/what-low-income-housing-tax-credit-and-how-does-it-work>; “Low-Income Housing Tax Credits,” National Housing Law Project, n.d., accessed January 31, 2024, <https://www.nhlp.org/resource-center/low-income-housing-tax-credits/>.

38. Bae, Opening Doors to Affordable Housing.

39. Id.

40. U.S. Department of Justice, Organization and Functions Manual (Washington, D.C., September 19, 2018), <https://www.justice.gov/jm/organization-and-functions-manual-13-bureau-justice-assistance-bja>.

41. “Project HOPE,” City of Wichita, n.d., accessed January 31, 2024, <https://www.wichita.gov/415/Project-HOPE>.

- **Georgia’s Criminal Justice Coordinating Council** will use funds from BJA’s Adult Treatment Court Discretionary Grant Program to subsidize shelter and transitional housing for participants in local drug courts, an alternative to incarceration for those with substance use disorders.⁴²

State and Local Funds

Some localities have been able to tap into state or local general funds, bypassing federal restrictions and avoiding taking existing housing resources away from other groups in need. However, local discretion on outlays may make decisions about the use of these funds particularly vulnerable to stigma against those with criminal justice backgrounds, as detailed in Section V.

- The **Wichita - Sedgwick County Housing First Program** is supported by general funds from the city and county,⁴³ giving the program more flexibility to serve a wider range of clients, including those with justice involvement and convictions for sex offenses.
- Los Angeles County, California’s **Care First, Jails Last** successful ballot initiative commits 10 percent of the jurisdiction’s locally generated unrestricted revenue to advance alternatives to incarceration and decrease racial inequities. As described in the Year 2 Spending Plan, the initiative will allocate, among other resources, over \$45 million in housing, primarily for those experiencing homelessness with complex health conditions.⁴⁴

Private Funds

Philanthropy

Philanthropic dollars can be a valuable source of initial funding for new, innovative programming. **Grants** are monetary awards that generally do not have to be paid back by the grantee, while **program-related investments** are philanthropic financing tools that give non-profits access to low-cost loans or equity investments.

- **Impact Justice’s Homecoming Project** matches homeowners willing to rent spare bedrooms with individuals returning from long-term incarceration. While the California state government now provides some funding for the initiative, philanthropic grants were its first and remain its primary source of funding to support the screening process, time-limited rental assistance, and support with communication and collaboration between participants and hosts.
- The multi-city **Just Home** project, supported by The Urban Institute, increases the supply of housing available to those with criminal justice history by using program-related investments from the MacArthur Foundation to acquire and/or develop affordable housing.

Pay for Success

Rather than a distinct funding source, Pay for Success is a framework for structuring funding from for-profit, non-profit, and/or public sources. Funders, often philanthropies or other social impact investors, cover the upfront costs of a social program and, together with a government partner, define desired outcomes for the program’s target population. Governments repay the initial investment if the program achieves its target outcomes, and investors may receive more if the program results in additional saved costs for the public sector.⁴⁵ Pay for Success funding can take many forms, such as outcomes-based contracts and social impact bonds.⁴⁶

42. “Georgia’s Criminal Justice Coordinating Council,” U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance, September 27, 2023, <https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/awards/15pbja-23-gg-04292-dgct>.

43. “Wichita - Sedgwick County Housing First Program,” n.d., accessed January 31, 2024, <https://www.sedgwickcounty.org/comcare/homelessness/wichita-sedgwick-county-housing-first-program/>.

44. “Care First Community Investment (CFCI),” Justice Care and Opportunities Department, n.d., accessed January 31, 2024, <https://jcod.lacounty.gov/cfci/>.

45. “What Is Pay for Success (PFS)?,” Urban Institute, December 14, 2017, <https://pfs.urban.org/pfs-101/content/what-pay-success-pfs>.

46. “What is Pay for Success?” Social Finance, accessed January 31, 2024, <https://socialfinance.org/what-is-pay-for-success/>.

- The **Denver Supportive Housing Social Impact Bond Initiative** provided supportive services and housing subsidies for individuals who were homeless and had several interactions with the criminal justice system. The program paired housing supports (funded through HUD programs and Colorado state vouchers) with supportive services paid upfront by philanthropic foundations, non-profit financiers, and for-profit financial service companies.⁴⁷ The program was effective in increasing housing stability and reducing interactions with the carceral system, leading to private financiers receiving a \$1 million return on their investment from the City of Denver.⁴⁸
- Los Angeles County’s **Just in Reach Pay for Success** program used performance-based contracts to fund supportive housing services for over 300 individuals with disabilities and histories of homelessness exiting county jails. A foundation and health insurance company provided most of the upfront costs for service delivery. After four years, independent evaluators found that the program effectively supported long-term housing stability and reduced recidivism, contributing to public cost savings and a return on the private financiers’ investments.⁴⁹

47. Corporation for Supportive Housing, *Frequent Users Systems Engagement (FUSE): Denver Supportive Housing Social Impact Bond Initiative (Denver SIB)*, June 2022, https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CSH_HRSA_Case-Study_Denver-SIB_Final.pdf.

48. “A 5-Year Denver-Based Supportive Housing Project Achieves ‘Remarkable Success’ for People Entrenched in Homelessness and Jail Stays,” Corporation for Supportive Housing, July 15, 2021, <https://www.csh.org/2021/07/denver-supportive-housing-project-achieves-remarkable-success-for-homelessness-and-jail-stays/>.

49. Corporation for Supportive Housing, *CSH Just-in-Reach Pay for Success Annual Report 2022*, 2022, <https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/CSH-Just-in-Reach-Pay-for-Success-Annual-Report-2022.pdf>.