**CRIMINAL JUSTICE REENTRY AND HOMELESSNESS**

The Problem: The challenges that people face in securing housing upon re-entering the community from jail or prison are substantial. Systems are fragmented, and no particular agency is responsible for providing housing to individuals leaving prisons and jails.

The Result: People who are released from jails and prisons are among those most vulnerable to homelessness.

**People experiencing homelessness**

**Arrests and
incarceration
(time in jail or prison**)

Factors Associated with Increased Risk of Homelessness After Release from Jail or Prison:

* Unemployment
* Limited job skills
* Criminal record (especially sex offense convictions)
* Chronic health conditions
* Substance abuse
* Mental health issues
* Weakened family and social ties

Programs that seek to prevent homelessness after reentry:

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| **Intervention** | **Common Components of Intervention** | **Evidence Base** | **Gaps in the Evidence Base** |
| Discharge Planning | Needs assessments, case management, family engagement, skills building, “in-reach,” and housing planning provided to inmates prior to release. | Qualitative evidence suggests that discharge planning combined with supports after release are related to improved housing and other positive outcomes. However, it is difficult to isolate the impact of discharge planning on housing outcomes without considering the housing context following discharge. | In-reach programs that link people to housing providers before they leave prison or jail seem promising, but more rigorous evidence on their effectiveness is needed. |
| Community Corrections Facilities (CCFs) | Residential programs with staff supervision and programmatic services designed to facilitate successful transitions. Residents are subject to the rules of the correctional department and can be sent back to prison or jail for any violation. | CCFs provide temporary shelter for the initial time in the community when individuals are most vulnerable to homelessness. The literature points to mixed success of CCFs reducing recidivism and provides **no evidence** on housing outcomes after release from CCF programs.  | More research about CCFs ability to facilitate transitions to longer-term stable housing is needed, including research that measures the effectiveness of halfway houses on specific populations such as substance users. |
| Rental Assistance | Program delivery varies; most programs provide case management, services such as employment supports, referrals to community housing agencies, and rental assistance with varying durations.  | There is **some evidence** that providing rental assistance for a limited period of time is associated with reductions in homelessness for people leaving incarceration, but program evaluations rarely report housing outcomes, and the impact of the housing supports is difficult to disentangle from the other services. | Programs with contrasting designs should be implemented and evaluated, with explicit measurement of homelessness and housing stability. |
| Supportive Housing | Combines housing that has an ongoing rental subsidy with supportive services available to help people maintain their housing and address social service, healthcare and behavioral health needs. | There is **strong evidence** that SH has ability to place and retain formerly incarcerated people in housing. SH serves people who are considered difficult to house because of long-term homelessness, disability (including mental illness and substance use), and histories of incarceration. | More research would be useful for isolating the elements of this approach that contribute to the positive housing outcomes—for example, types of housing, types and intensity of available services, and fidelity to a housing first approach. |

Implications for Policy and Practice

* Federal, state, and local criminal justice systems should provide adequate funding to jails and prisons to ensure that discharge planning has the capacity to place people at risk of housing instability and homelessness into a stable residence in the first weeks following release. Discharge planning should include expanded in-reach programs that involve community-based housing providers and housing authorities.
* Given its proven effectiveness, supportive housing needs to be more widely available for high-needs individuals leaving prisons and jails to the community.
* Stakeholders in the criminal justice systems design, fund, and evaluate reentry programming that support living with partners and in other family settings. Those supports would include diversion assistance, subsidies to renters and homeowners (including local or state tax credits for households that receive a reentering individual), and family mediation services.
* Stakeholders in the criminal justice and housing services systems should work with public housing authority staff and boards to implement policies that apply housing rules in more flexible ways.

Implications for Research and Evaluation

* Service providers and system planners should track outcomes to evaluate the success of interventions and policy changes, housing stability and homelessness prevention, as well as education and employment outcomes and recidivism.
* Federal government agencies and philanthropy should support the evaluation of community-level interventions with outcomes that go beyond recidivism and reoffending and include housing. Interventions that indicate effectiveness should be scaled up and tested across communities with different housing, employment, and criminal justice environments.

Bottom Line

Addressing housing instability upon reentry will require partnerships between criminal justice and community services systems; participation by providers of affordable housing; and involvement by policymakers and funders at all levels of government.