

Vera

Housing Access for People with Conviction
Histories

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Vera's vision, mission, and focus

Vision

Safe, healthy, empowered communities and a fair, accountable justice system.

Mission

To end the overcriminalization and mass incarceration of people of color, immigrants, and people experiencing poverty.

STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS

1. End criminalization of people of color and immigrant communities
2. Minimize the footprint of jails, prisons, and detention centers
3. Center dignity and minimize the harms of justice and immigration systems
4. Blueprint accountable institutions that move resources to communities

Housing is a Human Right

A person's conviction history should never be a barrier to housing.



Housing for People with Conviction Histories

10X

Formerly incarcerated people are 10 times more likely to be unhoused.

203

per 10,000 people

The relationship between homelessness and incarceration is cyclical.

Housing promotes **public safety** and is essential for **successful reentry**

- Stable housing supports improved reintegration and desistance from criminal behavior for people leaving prison
- Housing makes it more likely that a person returning to their community:
 - finds and keeps employment
 - gets connected to medical, mental, and behavioral healthcare
 - rebuilds supportive and prosocial networks within their community
 - reestablishes mutually supportive bonds with family
- Housing access is associated with lower recidivism

(Lebel, 2017; Lutze et al, 2014; Metreaux and Culhane, 2004; Metraux et al, 2020; Nelson et al, 1999; Rosenfeld and Grigg, 2022)

Conviction history is not a good predictor of housing success

- Most people with a conviction never have another one.
- There is no evidence that excluding people with a conviction makes housing complexes safer.
- There is no evidence that people with conviction histories have different tenancy outcomes than those without a history of conviction.

(Bushway et al, 2022; Malone 2009; Rhodes et al, 2016; Rosenfeld and Grigg, 2022)

Opening Doors to Affordable Housing

Opening Doors to Affordable Housing: The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program and People with Conviction Histories (2023)

Opening Doors webpage:
<https://www.vera.org/investing-in-communities/opening-doors-to-housing-initiative>



Louisiana Housing Corporation (LHC) Policies for Criminal Background Screening

Tenant screening policies must achieve, “substantial, legitimate, nondiscriminatory interests.” The policy also stipulates that housing providers:

- may not consider arrests, charges that did not result in a conviction, and records from the juvenile legal system
- apply specified lookback periods for certain types of convictions (3 to 5 years)
- consider reasonable accommodations if conviction was related to a person’s disability
- must allow applicants to submit mitigating evidence for an individualized assessment

New York City Housing Authority



NYCHA Family Re-Entry Program:

- The Family Re-Entry Program offers people recently released from correctional facilities (including prison, jail, or juvenile facilities) an opportunity to live with family in NYCHA housing.

Program features:

- Temporary permission to live with family for two years. *Rent does not change for two years.*
- Participants receive reentry services throughout the program.
- Upon successful completion of two-year program, participants are eligible to be added to a family's lease.

Collaborative partners:

- Referral and supportive services provided by 13 reentry service providers.
- Key partners include Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, Department of Homeless Services, and Corporation for Supportive Housing.

New York City Housing Authority

145 graduates have successfully completed Family Re-Entry and **54** have been successfully added back to the lease.

