“We are here to stay.”

-K., FORMERLY INCARCERATED, HOMELESS

The Consequences of Housing Discrimination Against People with Criminal Records

June 2005
Acknowledgements

In partnership with Making Connections Providence, the Rhode Island Family Life Center is conducting research and designing solutions to housing discrimination faced by people recently released from incarceration and with criminal records. Making Connections Providence, a program of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, provided generous funding for the research, writing and publication of this report. A number of individuals contributed to this report by lending their time and expertise. The Family Life Center thanks the members of the FLC/CDC Housing Action Group of Making Connections Providence, all of whom provided oversight and advice. In particular, Jim Alexander, John Prince, Nancy Howard, Robyn Frye, Alvin John and Michelle Malloy offered invaluable assistance. The Family Life Center is also grateful to the following individuals, who were interviewed as part of this research: Robyn Frye, Nancy Howard, Rosemarie Amato, Amy Rainone, and Stephen O’Rourke. The Family Life Center also thanks Betsy Grenier for editing the report. Finally, the research team is deeply grateful for the willingness, time and honesty of the eighteen focus group participants, who continue to face housing discrimination in various ways and whose experiences form the basis for this report.

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The Family Life Center/CDC Housing Action Group of
Making Connection Providence

The Making Connections Initiative, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, works in low-income neighborhoods in 22 cities to foster programs, activities and policies that promote strong families. Until May of 2005, the Providence Making Connections Initiative worked through 12 Action Groups, each focused on one of four result areas (neighborhoods, housing, education, and jobs/family assets). The Family Life Center/CDC housing group formed in the summer of 2004, with two primary tasks. First, the team was to research the barriers to housing experienced by formerly incarcerated residents of the four neighborhoods in the Making Connections Providence target area: Upper South Providence, Lower South Providence, Elmwood and the West End. Second, the team was to initiate programming to address this issue. The entire team was instrumental in the development of this report.

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Executive Summary

Everyone released from prison must ask, “Where will I sleep tonight?” This year, approximately 1,200 Providence residents, 350 of them from the Southside, will face this question, and the answer is often uncertain. Recently released from prison, these individuals rarely have the means to rent in the private market, and when they do, landlords discriminate against them. They often have no supportive family to house them, are prohibited from entering public housing for ten years, and cannot secure transitional or supportive housing. For many, emergency shelters, the streets or illegal apartment sharing are the only options.

Yearly, about 200 people returning from prison to Providence go homeless, and they are only one group facing unstable housing because of incarceration. Other ex-prisoners may live illegally in unsafe tenements without a lease, or in overcrowded apartments, burdening family members. Further, families themselves can also face unstable housing because of the incarceration or the return of a loved one.

Unstable housing compounds the myriad challenges (finding a job, rebuilding family, staying sober, etc.) that former prisoners face, making it more difficult to avoid recidivism and reincarceration. Further, when families of the formerly incarcerated experience housing instability, they inherit the same risks that their loved ones face — risks that can lead to prison. Housing is a life area through which the “ripple effects” of incarceration on families and communities travel.

Rhode Island’s housing market has tightened tremendously in recent years. Average rent for a studio apartment in 2003 was $697, an 11 percent increase from 2002; in the same year, median income statewide only increased by one-half percent. To ensure that all have shelter and no one is paying too much for it by 2010, Rhode Island needs an estimated 37,000 new units of affordable housing, and 50,000 Rhode Island families need subsidies. In this context, discrimination is likely, and groups that are not protected by Rhode Island’s fair housing law, such as people with criminal records, are the only legal targets of discrimination.

The two largest providers of housing in the state, the rental market and public housing, discriminate in policy and practice against individuals with criminal records and their families. Further, there is little transitional and permanent supportive housing, and many of these units have restrictions against people with records. Of the 380 transitional housing beds in Providence, just 74 are reasonably accessible to recently released single individuals. Likewise, only 74 of the 450 supportive housing beds in Providence are reasonably accessible to former prisoners. Competition for these beds is high, and turnover is low.

Stable housing for former prisoners and their families is a public safety issue. When former prisoners fail to find safe housing, they may recidivate and be consequently returned to the Adult Correctional Institutions (ACI), which...
provide fully state-subsidized housing for 3,500 people. Affordable housing in Rhode Island is a scarce resource, provided according to a system that is reactive and exclusionary. It supports only the most responsible, the convicted, and those awaiting trial—but not those who are vulnerable and at-risk.

Existing housing must become less discriminatory and more stable, but we also need new housing for everybody in order to not simply displace risk. Rhode Island can take one of two approaches to meet the housing needs of individuals with criminal records and their families. We can continue to avoid the risk they pose through exclusionary policies, and suffer the consequences of crime, homelessness, family instability and a growing prison budget. Or we can work to prevent further victimization by pro-actively mitigating risk while maintaining an inclusive process that ensures safe and supportive housing opportunities for everyone.

**Report Overview**

**Chapter One** contains the majority of the findings from two focus groups conducted at the Family Life Center. Key findings:
- There is a cyclical relationship between incarceration, housing instability and the risk factors that lead to prison.
- Unstable housing is one way that risks associated with crime and incarceration spread from individuals to families and communities.
- Strong, positive family relationships and intensive case management are good indicators for individuals finding more stable housing.

**Chapter Two** describes the major types of housing providers in Providence and their policies and practices regarding former prisoners. Significant findings:
- Most housing providers discriminate against the formerly incarcerated.
- Transitional and supportive housing providers offer a good model for ex-offender housing, but there is not enough of this service-oriented housing to meet the demand, nor is it reasonably accessible to former prisoners.
- Discrimination against individuals with criminal records, although legal, undermines the intent of Rhode Island’s Fair Housing Practices Act.

**Chapter Three** is a comprehensive set of recommendations for providing more stable housing to ex-prisoners and their families while taking into account the severe burdens already in place on affordable housing for all low-income Rhode Islanders. The recommendations cover two broad strategy areas: making current housing resources more stable and more accessible for the formerly incarcerated and creating new, non-discriminatory housing resources for all.

**Appendix A** contains the focus group methodology and background information on participants; **Appendix B** contains additional information from the focus groups, and **Appendix C** is the results of a capacity and accessibility survey conducted of transitional and supportive housing providers in Providence.
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Risk, Disruption and Reentry:
The Causes and Consequences of Housing Instability

Section Summary

Many residents of Providence’s Southside have chronically unstable housing due to a criminal record, their incarceration and/or the incarceration of a loved one. The Family Life Center convened two focus groups of 18 such individuals to understand interactions between incarceration and housing.

The relationship appears to be cyclical; incarceration and the specter of a criminal record destabilize housing for individuals and families. In turn, unstable housing can lead to incarceration and reincarceration because it compromises family stability and threatens employment prospects, and it is self-sustaining—the less stable an individual’s housing situation, the harder it is for that individual to find better housing. Housing is a life area through which the “ripple effects” of incarceration on families and communities propagate.

Former prisoners employ various strategies in the search for better housing; among the focus group participants, the best indicators for success in this pursuit were supportive family and intensive case management.

L.’s Story

L. lived with her daughter in Boston. They were poor but had a stable living situation; indeed, L. had never had problems with the law, and had been living in the same place for over twenty years. After becoming involved with drugs, L.’s daughter moved out and started living on the streets and at friends’ houses. However, when L.’s daughter was arrested, she used her mother’s address to identify herself. When L.’s landlord learned that someone who was ostensibly living in her apartment had committed a drug offense, L.’s life changed forever. “I ended up losing my housing that I had for twenty-something years...and that’s when shit just hit the fan.” After the eviction, L. couldn’t find affordable housing in Boston and decided to move to the Southside of Providence; her daughter moved to join her when she was released from prison.
In the twelve years since then, L. could not find a stable housing situation, became involved with drugs herself and has been incarcerated at the ACI at least four times. Her daughter lives in Rhode Island, and they are still in contact, but their relationship has never fully healed. When L. was last released from prison in November of 2003, her daughter would not let her move in. She has been homeless since then, at times living illegally in friends’ apartments and at times living in local homeless shelters. L. is working full time, and has been for the past four months. Holding a job has not been easy, especially when she lives in a shelter. “I don’t want to get up at five o’clock in the morning and hang around three hours before I go to work and then maybe get a chance of getting back [in time to get a bed] because I don’t get out of work ‘til seven or eight at night.”

L.’s job gives her hope that she’ll be able to find her own housing, but she is aware that the market provides few, if any, options for someone of her background and income level. “I work six days a week, and I work hard…but the thing is I can’t afford to pay a security and a month’s rent, and then once I do do that, and I get in, who’s to say I’m going to be able, when [the landlord] raises the rent in six months…to afford it anyway?”

Prisoner Reentry in Rhode Island

Over 3,500 individuals will be released from Rhode Island’s prisons this year, including 1,200 who will return to Providence. An estimated 1 in 10 will, like L., end up homeless; others will stay with family or friends; and a few lucky ones will gain access to transitional housing or find a place they can rent. The recently released are not the only Rhode Islanders facing housing discrimination because of their criminal records; statewide, over 20,688 people live in the community on probation or parole. In Providence, 6,846 individuals are on probation or parole, 1 in every 19 adults. The rates are even higher in the four Providence Making Connections neighborhoods: 1 in 6 adult men in Elmwood and the West End, and 1 in 4 adult men in Upper and Lower South Providence are on probation or parole. A still larger percentage of the population has a past criminal record. For all of these individuals, finding housing is especially arduous in a housing market that can legally discriminate against those with records.

1 All “current” data on focus group participants was reported as of Dec., 2004 at two focus groups convened at the RI Family Life Center.
4 Rhode Island Department of Corrections, Prisoner Reentry in Rhode Island, p. 16.
5 Ibid., p. 20.
Focus Groups

In order to better understand the relationship between incarceration and housing at the individual and community level, the Rhode Island Family Life Center, in partnership with Making Connections Providence, convened two focus groups. Fifteen participants were formerly incarcerated and three were family members of currently or formerly incarcerated individuals; participants also must have had trouble, at some point, in securing housing. Before convening the focus groups, the research team understood that this population faces both practical discrimination and discrimination based on policies that have the stated goal of public safety (see Chapter Two). Thus the goal of our focus groups was not to establish that discrimination exists (although they certainly provided anecdotal support for this claim). Rather, our focus groups were meant to answer the following three questions:

1. What are some of the collateral consequences of housing discrimination against the formerly incarcerated for individuals, families and communities?
2. What strategies are individuals employing to find housing and how successful are they?
3. What are possible components of a housing program that might appeal to and work for formerly incarcerated individuals?

For more detailed information on focus group participants and their past experiences with housing and corrections, see Appendix A, which provides more context for the following analysis and information.

Collateral Consequences of Unstable Housing and Incarceration

An unstable housing situation poses serious risks to an individual’s ability to locate better housing, find employment, maintain sobriety, access social services and, ultimately, to avoid reincarceration. Families feel the impact as well; the incarceration of a loved one can mean reduced income, loss of housing, social stigma that make it hard to recover (in order, for instance, to find housing after an eviction) and negative psychological effects, especially for children. Further, depending on how a family can and does handle the release of a relative, the reentry process can pose a threat to family stability and unity.

Any family will sometimes find itself in situations where the best interests of one family member seem to oppose the best interests of another, but for families attempting to negotiate the compounded problems of incarceration and housing instability, the consequences surrounding any resolution of such conflicts can be dire. In other words, the risks associated with a criminal record can reproduce themselves in the lives of loved ones who might never have had problems with the law, and new risks are created when the issues that ex-prisoners face intersect with the tensions that already exist for low-income families.
Recall L.’s story; her family was poor, but they were getting along. There was stress, but L. knew how to manage it, and she had been doing so for twenty years. Her daughter’s incarceration, however, was an overload; it was the catalyst that caused all her fragile threads to unravel, and the fabric of her life came apart. Now she faces the challenge of reconstructing her own life and, she hopes, that of the rest of her family.

The Risks Associated with Unstable Housing at the Individual Level

Formerly incarcerated respondents discussed four risk factors in which their housing status played a role: persistent unemployment, the inability to find better housing, the lure of drug relapse and the possibility of reincarceration.

Employment

All focus group participants agreed that, except for individuals with disabilities that might prevent them from working, former prisoners should make employment a priority. One respondent remarked that “you could really end up back where you started from” if you do not find a job to keep you busy. Other participants strongly affirmed this statement. However, only three of the 15 formerly incarcerated respondents are currently employed. One of these three is homeless (L.), one is a market rate renter, and one is living with family.7

Of the remaining 12 formerly incarcerated individuals, two receive SSI benefits and one is in transitional programming that occupies part of the day; one of the two on SSI is homeless, and the other lives in section 8 housing. The respondent in transitional programming lives in a house associated with that program. The remaining nine, who are completely unemployed, consist of eight who are currently homeless (either living in a shelter or couch surfing), and one who is living in subsidized housing.8 Nearly all of the unemployed respondents were in the most unstable living arrangements.

When asked about employment prospects, one homeless respondent replied, “[You have] no permanent address, no phone number where they can reach you at; I feel like it’s hopeless...you have no transportation to the job...that’s why I don’t have a job right now.” Again, other homeless respondents affirmed this statement. One respondent reported working with a case manager at a shelter to find employment, but like L., found it hard to balance a job with the restrictions of shelter life. “I worked with the person at the shelter place, but that was

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7 For the purposes of this report, “living with family” means that an individual lives with family but hopes to and/or is expected to be able to move out at some time. When an individual lives with family in a permanent manner, they are considered to have the same type of housing as their family (i.e., market rate rental or public housing).

8 For the purposes of this document, “couch surfing” is defined as homeless, but predominantly sleeping at a string of friends’ houses; couch surfers may also spend some time at shelters, but this is not their predominant housing strategy.
useless…. I wasn’t guaranteed a bed so if I went to work, then it was either go to work and stay up all night to go to work the next day, or not go to work and go to the shelter….”

Housing

Participants also reported that housing instability makes it difficult to find improved living conditions. Respondents gave two reasons for this; first, given the difficulty of finding employment, it is difficult to make enough money to begin paying rent. Second, many respondents reported that to afford housing, it’s often necessary to “double up”, but they complained that because of transience, the pool of roommates available to them consists of people that they are “thrown together with” rather than individuals that they might pick on the basis of trust and rapport. Six respondents had experiences with roommates who robbed them and/or used the property they rented together as a place to do hard drugs. L. spoke of coming home on a few different occasions to find her living room (when she had one) filled with “people in there smoking crack.” Similarly, one participant reported that he is currently being evicted because he was robbed of his rent money by other tenants in his building; he feels this would not have happened had he been in a more secure building—a building he can’t afford.

Drug Use and Recidivism

In the context of all of this uncertainty, 12 of the 15 formerly incarcerated respondents felt at risk to recidivate and/or relapse into drug use, and, of these 12, all felt that their current housing situation contributed to this risk. One of the family members also reported that people in her family have committed crimes after coming out that she felt were linked to their housing situation.

Furthermore, many respondents reported that their housing situation before their most recent incarceration contributed to their crime and/or their drug habit. T., a young man from Providence, recalled:

I was homeless, and I ended up doing something stupid, and I ended up getting arrested but if I would have had a good place to stay…that probably wouldn’t have happened. But I was on the streets and I was acting wild and stuff…I guess I was mad at the world and acting out, ended up getting locked up.

S., another participant, spoke about how his housing situation tempted him to start using drugs again.

When you’re homeless…it’s just so hard to stop [using]…. You go from place to place and once your stuff runs out you’re out the door…. It’s much easier to just keep going—you don’t have no bills, no responsibilities or nothing—until you get locked up or something happens.

The group strongly affirmed S.’s statement. L. commented, “I had no stable place to live…you gotta be out there trying to find a place to stay…and sometimes you do shit you don’t wanna do.”
While some respondents spoke of relapse as a consequence of despair or anger, others were candid about using criminal activity as a way to stabilize housing costs when they could not find work. “Some guys,” said one respondent, “learn new crimes, so when they get out they do have a plan…. There’s no job; they’re not gonna get any money, so you gonna go and try to do the same thing you were doing before.” The use of illegal activity as a strategy to make housing affordable will be considered again later.

An unstable housing situation can make it difficult for formerly incarcerated individuals to find work, and further, housing instability can be self-replicating, leading some to commit new crimes in the uphill battle for better housing. Further complicating this set of risk factors are the effects that incarcerated individuals can have on their families’ stability.

**Family Situation of Focus Group Participants**

Before considering the ways in which the incarceration of one member can complicate the lives of everyone in an entire family, some details on the focus group participants’ family situations should be noted. For these questions, non-incarcerated family members answered on behalf of the incarcerated. Twelve respondents had children at the time of their most recent incarceration; six respondents had adult children, and six (including the two that are currently incarcerated) have young children. For each of the currently incarcerated parents, the family member present (one mother/grandmother and one wife/mother) as a respondent was currently the guardian of their children.

Five of the six respondents with young children reported living with those children at the time of their most recent incarceration. Currently, only two formerly incarcerated respondents are living with their children, including one man who has been living with his adult daughter since his release. The two non-incarcerated respondents that are caring for the children of an incarcerated parent reported that they have not decided whether they will allow the children’s parent to move in with them when they are released. Another respondent was pregnant; she was with her partner, and they were both homeless.

Five respondents were married and living with their spouse at the time of their most recent incarceration. Of the five, one is still incarcerated. One participant’s spouse died during the respondent’s incarceration. One is still with her spouse, but they are both homeless. One is renting a house with her spouse, and one is estranged from his spouse. Two respondents indicated having a serious partner with whom they lived on and off in the months preceding their most recent incarceration; one of these respondents is still incarcerated, and one is out of prison and no longer seeing the partner. Two respondents reported having an estranged spouse with whom they were not living before their most recent incarceration, and one respondent reported being divorced.
The Effect of Incarceration and Reentry on Families’ Housing

Many focus group respondents had the experience of both being affected by the incarceration of a loved one and having their incarceration affect the rest of their family. Nine respondents (including non-incarcerated individuals responding on behalf of their incarcerated family members) reported that they or their family were evicted as a direct result of incarceration, on one or more occasions. Two of these respondents cited occasions on which they were held for less than a month and had already paid the next month’s rent but were still evicted.

Four reported losing housing as an indirect effect of incarceration. Of the four, one respondent reported having a restraining order filed against him while in prison, rendering him unable to return home. One respondent lived with his father before being incarcerated, but his father died while he was in prison, and as a result, he was homeless when he was released. “When I got out,” he recollected, “I got out to nowhere.” One respondent defaulted on his mortgage payments while in jail in another state and when the bank foreclosed, his partner and children were evicted as well. One respondent reported that upon her incarceration, her family (partner and children) had to move because of income loss.

Also, eight respondents (including non-incarcerated family speaking on their own behalf) reported losing their housing on one or more occasions as a result of another family member’s incarceration. Five reported that a suspicious landlord evicted them. Two had to move because of income loss pursuant to a partner’s incarceration, and one had to move in with relatives in another state because he was a minor at the time, and his only parent was incarcerated.

While the prevalence of family housing loss pursuant to the incarceration of one family member is striking, it is also important to note that families that lose housing become candidates for the same risky behaviors and situations that might have led to their loved one’s incarceration. L., for example, was one of five formerly incarcerated respondents who at some point lost housing because of a family member’s incarceration and cited the loss of housing as a factor in their own troubles with the law. T. recalled such a turning point in his life:

In 1985, my father went to jail, and I went to Connecticut and stayed with my second family, which kind of, like, messed my mind up a little bit cause I missed him. I was fifteen, sixteen, and got involved with a lot of drug dealing, and at home I was a free bird, did whatever I wanted… To this day, I have flashbacks to all that.
Just as some offenders move from housing that enables a criminal lifestyle into a prison and back into risky housing, their family members must sometimes secure new housing when their loved ones are incarcerated only to be forced to reconsider that housing situation when family members are released. Like the many respondents mentioned above who had to move because of a family member’s incarceration, N. reported:

[my spouse’s incarceration] affected me because it cut my income in half. I had to move; I got behind in rent; I got behind in bills; I got behind in everything…. I had to take my children and go into a shelter.

N. has secure housing now, but as her spouse’s release approaches and it becomes clear to her that he has few prospects for housing or employment, she faces some difficult questions: will it be healthy for her and her children if he moves in; if not, where will he go; will her landlord even allow him to move in; if not, will their combined income be sufficient to support a move? The other respondent with a currently incarcerated family member reported that she has sheltered family members after their release from prison in the past, and now she faces the same questions about her daughter’s return home. She said that sheltering family in the past made her feel as though she was putting herself at risk.

Community Safety, Incarceration and Families

Each of the two major events in one period of incarceration—imprisonment itself and reentry—has the potential to jeopardize (or, in some cases, further jeopardize) the stability of housing for the sentenced individual and for their family. Each moment in which housing is jeopardized presents desperate circumstances in which individuals can lose employment and/or turn to illegal activities. Housing, then, is one of the life areas through which the “ripple effects” of incarceration can travel, destabilizing families and the communities in which they reside. In communities that feel the effects of incarceration most strongly, such as the Southside of Providence, plans for community safety need to incorporate initiatives that stabilize housing for former prisoners and their families.
Strategies in the Search for Housing for the Formerly Incarcerated

In the absence of an integrated system to provide secure and stable housing, former prisoners search for housing and fight to keep housing by employing a variety of strategies that draw from a limited palette of resources and opportunities. After talking about whether or not they had a plan to find housing when they came out of prison, respondents discussed the relative merits of four strategies: searching the housing market through traditional means, illegal strategies, family-based strategies and institution-based strategies.

Plans (or Lack Thereof) for Housing Post-Release

Nine focus group respondents reported that they had absolutely no post-release plan to find housing, and nine people reported that they did have a plan. Of the individuals with no plan, seven ended up homeless after their release; one lived with family, and one became a market rate renter, moving back in with family in a permanent manner. The nine who did have a plan included the two currently incarcerated individuals, who were planning to move in with their family members who were present as respondents.

The nine respondents who had a plan were asked to explain what that plan was. Five planned to live with family; two were successful. The two still-incarcerated individuals who plan to live with family do not know yet whether they will be successful in their plan, as their present family members are, again, not yet sure whether it will be healthy for them and the children to allow them to move in. One individual planning to live with family became homeless.

One individual came out planning to live with friends briefly and mount an intensive search for rental property (market-rate or subsidized), but ended up couch surfing for an extended period of time and is still homeless. Two respondents planned to head back to the shelter and were successful in this, and one planned to be in transitional housing and was successful in this.

Strategy 1: Traditional

All respondents reported that at some point they attempted to employ traditional means of finding housing in the rental market: checking newspapers and other listings, pounding pavement and making phone calls. For most respondents, finding good rental housing was their first choice, but because of their criminal records and their income levels, they considered it a long shot. For information on discrimination that respondents experienced in the rental housing market and the prohibitive pricing of “affordable” housing see Chapter Two. Despite being discouraged about their prospects in the rental housing market, respondents felt strongly that there is variation among landlords, and some are more willing than others to be understanding. One woman, the only formerly incarcerated respondent in the first focus group whose housing stability recently improved,
found a landlord “who was willing to take a chance.”9 “I let them know my whole situation and, y’know, sometimes it works.” She feels, however, that the rent is barely affordable given her income, her partner’s income, and the need to provide for their children.

Strategy 2: Illegal

As mentioned earlier, individuals living in unsteady housing sometimes commit crimes with the goal of attaining better housing or stabilizing their current situation. Respondents formulated this goal in two ways: getting extra income to supplement rent or other needs and committing crimes in the hope of being sent back to prison, but all respondents regretted having to think and act this way.

“When you’re paying 900 dollars and you’re getting 600 in, you gotta find a way to supplement that...so you do what comes natural.... I’m not...saying it’s right....” Later the same respondent spoke about times that he has considered trying to be sentenced to the ACI. “Bottom line is, you send me up there, I got a stable place to live. It ain’t the place I want to be, but bottom line is this; it’s warm and I’ll get three squares a day.” Again, 12 of the 15 formerly incarcerated respondents reported that their current housing situation made them feel at risk to recidivate and/or relapse into drug use. Participants were not polled directly on whether the crimes being considered constituted part of a strategy to achieve more stable housing. However, five respondents made statements to this effect, and they were met with general agreement. Strategic reincarceration is, in part, an unintended consequence of Rhode Island’s current public housing policy and the lack of affordable, transitional and supportive housing. (See Chapter Two for more discussion on the ACI as a form of public housing and the associated cost.)

Strategy 3: Family

In a housing market that can and will legally discriminate against individuals with criminal records, many must either stay with family or become homeless. Recall that, including couch surfers, the majority of respondents (11) were homeless after their most recent release, and three lived with family whereas only one lived in transitional housing and only one became a renter. As one respondent commented, “Without willing relatives, unfortunately, there’s not a plan.”

Again, among the nine respondents who had a plan, living with family, temporarily or permanently, was the most common strategy, but only two were successful; because of risks associated with taking in a formerly incarcerated loved one, families can be hesitant to help.

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9 For a view of various “housing trajectories,” see Appendix A, fig. A-1. However, the woman described here is not represented in this figure, which only describes formerly incarcerated respondents from the second focus group.
However, despite the low success rate of respondents seeking housing with family, respondents agreed that families that do have the means and inclination to help, as well as the ability to absorb and/or offset the risks, can be major stabilizing forces in their loved ones’ housing situations. Further, this support does not always have to take the form of direct provision of housing. D. is in stable transitional housing, but she reported that family support has helped her to obtain and maintain this living situation. E., who lives with his adult daughter, hopes one day to be able to move out but reports that he knows he can live with her as long as he needs, and because of his daughter, he has been able to hold a job and feels no risk to recidivate. Family-based strategies for housing stabilization among the formerly incarcerated present and sustain many of the same risks that lead to crime, but a family able to provide support without excessively burdening itself can play an important role in stabilizing all aspects of an ex-offender’s life, including housing.

**Strategy 4: Institution-based**

There are three institutional structures with a perceived direct interest in stable housing for the formerly incarcerated: discharge planning at the ACI, probation and parole, and formalized transitional housing units. According to respondents, discharge planning suffers from limited access, and for those who do receive planning, the plan is rarely effective. One respondent recalled:

> Before I went in… I was living at the ____ Hotel, which is eighty dollars a week, when I got out, I figured… it’ll be a little bit more; it was a hundred and forty-five dollars a week. I had no idea, the six and a half years I was in, that things went up that much.

What is striking about his story is that if just one person had asked him about his plan, his misconceptions about changes in the housing market could have been corrected, providing him with at least an opportunity to think of a better plan. That respondent is now living in a shelter. Another participant reported, “they never worked with me on the discharge plan… I never knew what a discharge plan was…. I didn’t know what the hell I was gonna do,” and many respondents echoed this sentiment.

Only three respondents reported working with discharge planners, and only one found stable housing while the other two are homeless. D., who is now in transitional housing said:

> I was very persistent so I got what I wanted…. I constantly was on my counselor… because I was worried about where I was gonna lay my head at; it’s cold out there…. If I wasn’t persistent…. I probably would be elsewhere.

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10 The full housing trajectory of D. is represented in Appendix A, fig. A-1.
11 The full housing trajectory of E. is represented in Appendix A, fig. A-1.
While D.’s persistence in working with her discharge planner should not be underestimated, it is important to note that there are more discharge services and transitional housing for female prisoners than for male prisoners.\(^\text{12}\)

For instance, T. insistently sought the attention of his discharge planner, but he is still homeless. He reported:

> Last year, before I was released I signed up for discharge planning…. I spoke to them about what I would like to do upon release…. Got me involved with___, got hooked up with SSI went through all the applications I had to go through…. I’m still here now trying to get an apartment…. If I didn’t have no family I could have been freezing; I would have froze to death by now or starved to death.

Another respondent who worked with a discharge planner felt that institutional barriers completely undermined the effectiveness of the plans he had built. He recalled, “I always get discharge planning, and one time they left me flatfooted. They were supposed to send me to a program…and I didn’t have no ticket to get there. I couldn’t get in touch with anybody to make plans…. “ Individualized discharge planning is only reaching mentally ill, high risk and medically compromised male prisoners; the rest receive discharge planning in a group setting.\(^\text{13}\)

If the goal of probation and parole is to facilitate smooth reentry for prisoners who are deemed ready to participate in society again, probation and parole officers should have a serious interest in the relative stability of their supervisees’ living situations. Focus group respondents included seven probationers and three parolees. When asked if their parole or probation officer has taken a role in finding them housing, most laughed; none responded in the affirmative. One respondent, however, reported that a probation officer had threatened him with a violation if he did not find stable housing.

Finally, respondents were enthusiastic about the idea of transitional housing, but their discussion of it reflected its limited availability. (Chapter Two discusses the general lack of transitional housing in Rhode Island; see also Appendix C.) Only one respondent had had experience with transitional housing, but she was currently in transitional housing and thus, could not discuss with much perspective its relative effectiveness in stabilizing her. While all respondents were familiar with the term “transitional housing,” many did not know that it was available at all in Rhode Island. When one respondent in the second focus group commented that the state should build transitional housing, everyone agreed enthusiastically.

\(^{12}\) Personal Correspondence with Teresa Foley (Professional Services Coordinator, Rhode Island Department of Corrections), May 4, 2005.

\(^{13}\) Ibid.
Possible Components of a Housing Program for the Formerly Incarcerated

In the absence of a widely accessible institutional response to their housing challenges, most ex-prisoners either face a discriminatory and expensive private housing market or pursue informal remedies that may be either illegal, burdensome to family, or both. All formerly incarcerated participants but one said they’d be willing to work with a case manager; T., the lone dissenter, felt that he had too many case managers already and none of them were able to help him. All respondents said they would be willing to participate in tenancy classes or trainings if doing so would increase their chances of finding stable housing, and all said they’d be willing to make repairs to their rental unit. The prospect of being actively “involved” in a housing situation was exciting for many of the respondents.

All respondents reported that whenever living with friends or family in a temporary situation, they made it a point to help in some way, most commonly with rent or food. At the same time, seven respondents in the second group reported having learned while growing up how to take care of an apartment, but only one of them, a chronically homeless individual, reported specifically being taught how to budget. A successful housing program must acknowledge and work with the life skills and enthusiasm that participants already have.

Finally, since the best indicators for stable housing were healthy, supportive family reunification and intensive case management, such a program (which would first need funding and housing resources) should incorporate these strategies. Case management should be responsible for all the life areas that affect and are affected by housing, the three most vital of which seem to be family itself, employment and the search for housing. Such a program should be able to reach individuals before they have to spend even one night in a shelter, and, when the program utilizes supportive housing, it should be permanent for those who need it to be. For extensive recommendations, see Chapter Three.
Conclusion

The focus groups anecdotally illustrated some of the causes and consequences of incarceration-related housing instability. The main causes that they discussed were discrimination based on criminal records and economic issues due to the difficulty that ex-prisoners have in finding employment. (For more information on discriminatory policies and practice in housing, see Chapter Two.) They also described the ways in which housing instability is self-sustaining, existing in a regressive relationship to itself; the less stable a housing situation, the harder it is to find better housing.

Unstable housing and its consequences exist in a cyclical relationship: the consequences make the search for stable housing all the more difficult. Formerly incarcerated individuals with unstable housing have trouble finding employment and better housing, and they run a high risk of recidivism, relapse and reincarceration. Their families feel the impact as well, both at the time of their family member’s incarceration and at reentry. The housing of families can be destabilized when a loved one goes to prison because of lost income, discrimination and social stigma. At reentry, families face difficult questions about whether they can house their loved ones and then, whether they should. Ultimately, families can inherit many of the risks associated with the housing situation of their loved ones.

In order to negotiate the housing-related challenges that face them, individuals with criminal records struggle to find housing, using legal and illegal means. Among focus groups participants, the best indicators for housing success were a supportive family and access to an attentive counselor of some kind. However, families must have both the inclination and the means to provide effective support, and many prisoners never receive case management, or their case managers cannot offer sufficient aid.

In high incarceration neighborhoods, like South Providence, the complex interactions between incarceration, safety, housing, employment, poverty and family unity impact the social fabric of the entire community. The revitalization of these communities depends in part on the development of sustainable, community-based responses to the problem. Any comprehensive plan to respond to Rhode Island’s housing crisis (see Chapter Three) must specifically address the needs of the formerly incarcerated.
No Open Doors: Housing Discrimination Against People with Criminal Records

Section Summary

Rhode Island’s housing system consists of multiple providers: federally subsidized housing (public and Section 8), transitional housing, supportive housing, emergency shelters, correctional institutions and the private market.

For each type of housing provider, this section explores their suitability, accessibility, and restrictions for people released from prison and those with criminal records. In addition, research from the focus groups provides a more individualized portrait of people’s experiences trying to access housing.

Within each of these housing categories, there are providers that discriminate in policy and/or practice. Because of their affordability and attached services, public housing, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing are the most appropriate for the recently released, but public housing is highly discriminatory and the availability of supportive and transitional housing is extremely limited.

Introduction

Incarceration and reentry complicate and compromise the present and future housing options of individuals and families. The deep interplay between housing markets, family stability, incarceration and the lack of housing options can lead to increased social instability and significant public safety risks and costs (See Chapter One). This chapter focuses on legal forms of discrimination, established both in policy and practice, that negatively affect the housing options of people released from prison, people with criminal records and their families.
Federal Restrictions on Public Housing

"Exclusionary housing policies constitute one of the most significant barriers to reentry. People leaving prison and jail are typically among Americans with the most dire housing needs. For them, publicly supported housing is the only realistic option for safe and stable places to live. Excluded from public housing, they often end up swelling the ranks of the homeless, becoming inhabitants of grimy and unsafe transient hotels and motels, or crowd into the homes of relatives or friends. None of these options is conducive to the development of stable, productive lives for former prisoners or their children."


In 1996, under the Clinton Administration, the federal government instituted a host of new restrictions for people with criminal records trying to access subsidized housing.

Commonly known as "One-Strike and You're Out", the rule established a set of mandatory as well as discretionary restrictions designed to bolster the safety of public housing. The statute's logic is two-fold: to increase the safety of housing units by discriminating against individuals with substance abuse and/or criminal histories; and, to reserve federally subsidized housing for "deserving and responsible" individuals.¹

HUD guidelines state that public housing is no longer intended to provide housing to all or even serve as a safety net for those facing the greatest barriers to housing in the private market:

Because of the extraordinary demand for affordable rental housing, public and assisted housing should be awarded to responsible individuals. ... At a time when the shrinking supply of affordable housing is not keeping pace with the number of Americans who need it, it is reasonable to allocate scarce resources to those who play by the rules. ... By refusing to evict or screen out problem tenants, we are unjustly denying responsible and deserving low-income families access to housing and are jeopardizing the community and safety of existing residents who abide by the terms of their lease.²

The principle of making individuals with criminal records less eligible for subsidized housing is embodied in HUD's mandatory and discretionary restrictions.

² HUD, Office of Public and Indian Housing, “’One Strike and You’re Out’ Policy in Public Housing” (March 1996), contained in HUD Directive No. 96-16 (April 12, 1996), Guiding Principles of a One Strike Policy, Section I(b). Quoted in: No Second Chance, p. 20.
Mandatory Restrictions

Federal housing law requires Public Housing Authorities or other providers of federally subsidized housing to deny housing when any member of the applicant household:

1. Has been evicted from federally subsidized housing for drug related criminal activity in the last three (3) years. This restriction may be shortened if the member has undergone supervised drug treatment or the circumstances leading to the eviction no longer exist.
2. Was ever convicted of manufacturing methamphetamine on the premises of federally assisted housing.
3. Is subject to lifetime registration as a sex offender.
4. Is currently using drugs or if their pattern of drug use may threaten the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of other residents.
5. Is currently abusing alcohol or has a pattern of abuse that may threaten the health, safety, or peaceful enjoyment of the other residents.3

Discretionary Restrictions

In addition to the mandatory guidelines, the current federal housing laws permit housing authorities to deny admission, for public housing or Section 8, based on current or recent engagement in illegal activities; drug, violent or any other type of criminal offense is a basis for disqualification. In these cases, the housing authority may establish the period of time within which it will consider and review criminal histories of applicants. Further, housing authorities may force tenants of public housing to release their drug treatment history.

In reviewing applicants' criminal histories for Section 8 or other federally assisted housing, an applicant may be eligible if there is sufficient evidence that the person has not engaged in criminal activity for a reasonable length of time or someone can vouch for their desistance from crime.

When deciding when to deny admission or terminate tenancy, Section 8 owners may consider seriousness of offense, effect on community, leaseholder participation, effect on other families in line, leaseholder intervention, and the effect on other owners in the program; in public housing, the leaseholder's past financial performance, criminal and/or complaint record, and the seriousness/context of offense may be considered. Furthermore, for both Section 8 and public housing, local housing authorities may consider seriousness, extent of participation by family member, circumstances related to disability, and the effect on the family.

Clearly, the new federal guidelines established a stricter set of eligibility requirements designed to improve the safety and quality of life within federally assisted housing. This was to be accomplished by excluding those dealing with addiction to drugs and alcohol and those involved with the criminal justice system. Nationwide, in 1997, an estimated 43 percent of all rejections were due to the "One Strike" policy outlined above. Because of the breadth of discretionary restrictions for housing authorities to follow, the impact of these policies on applicants with criminal records varies greatly across municipalities.

Providence Housing Authority

The Providence Housing Authority (PHA) is the largest single provider of housing for low-income residents and families in the city. Approximately 1,400 family units provide housing for over 4,500 individuals in six developments and 236 scattered site houses. Another 1,000 units in seven developments provide housing to 1,200 elderly and disabled individuals. Two family developments and one elderly/disabled development are located in the Making Connections neighborhoods. In addition, the PHA administers over 2,100 Housing Choice Vouchers (commonly referred to as Section 8 vouchers).

Given high demand, the availability of these public housing units and Section 8 vouchers is scarce; applicants may wait several years to become eligible. Because the eligibility information of individuals on the waiting lists must be updated every six months, a costly proposition, the PHA maintains two waiting lists for those desiring public housing or Section 8 vouchers: a pre-application waiting list and a regular waiting list for which eligibility must be maintained. As of June 2004, there were 3,565 families on the pre-application waiting list for housing projects. As of October 2003, the Section 8 waiting list, which is currently closed to new applicants, had 2,247 families—1,788 pre-applicant families and 459 families on the regular list.

Figure 2-1: Providence Public Housing Developments
Six family and seven elderly developments; excluding scattered site houses.


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8 Providence Housing Authority, as reported to Providence Plan, October, 2003.
According to Stephen O’Rourke, Executive Director of the PHA, Providence already restricted applicants with criminal histories before the federal changes were applied in 1996. In fact, Providence was featured in the nationally distributed HUD video introducing the "One Strike and You’re Out" policy. In essence, the PHA’s policies not only apply the mandatory restrictions but also utilize the discretionary discrimination permitted by HUD to bar most applicants with a felony conviction.

In policy and practice, the PHA denies admission to public housing to applicants that have a history of criminal activity by any household member. During fiscal year 2004, 52 percent (84) of denials were due to a criminal record; 42% were for poor rental references. Director O’Rourke described that it is common practice to deny all applicants with criminal records within the past ten years and inform them of their right to appeal. Upon denial, applicants first go through an informal appeal to explain their situation; last year, only 8 percent (9) of informal appeals resulted in a reversal of ineligibility. After informal review, applicants can proceed to the formal appeal with representation by Rhode Island Legal Services or private attorney. According to PHA statistics, 11 formal hearings were held last year, and only one resulted in a reversal. While PHA may encourage applicants denied due to felony convictions to appeal, the statistics indicate that PHA is unlikely to provide housing to individuals with criminal records, even if they go through the appeals process.

One reason for applicants' low success at winning on appeal is the PHA’s policy regarding final determination of admission:

Subject to the PHA’s consideration of any mitigating circumstance, no member of the applicant family 18 years of age or older should be currently involved in criminal activity, have charges pending, or be convicted of a felony for a recommendation of admission. The PHA considers any criminal activity during the past 10 years.

In policy, Providence’s exclusion extends beyond the finding of a felony conviction to the innocent who have yet to be convicted, but are facing criminal charges.

The exclusion can also extend to families of justice-involved individuals for whom family (re)unification is a high priority. People released from prison and returning to live with families in public housing can jeopardize the tenancy of their entire family. This can result from the returning family member not being on the lease, but also due to the screening requirements outlined above. However, the PHA will consider adding a family member returning from incarceration to an existing lease if they come forward and ask to be put on the

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9 Providence Housing Authority, Annual Report p. 79.
10 Interview with Stephen O’Rourke (Executive Director, PHA), December 15, 2004.
11 Providence Housing Authority, Annual Report p. 132.
12 Providence Housing Authority. Department of Housing Management Administrative Plan, [Section 8.2.2 Final Determination, Criminal Activity]. Emphasis added.
lease and someone can attest to their character. If they are not upfront in their disclosure or the individual is determined likely to threaten the residential stability of the development, the family is asked not to allow the individual to continue residing in the unit. Director O’Rourke stated that families usually prefer to evict the individual than to try to find housing in the private market for the entire family.

The current policy and philosophy of the PHA does present an opportunity to develop a family reunification program for those living in public housing with family members released from prison and returning home.

Seven focus group participants reported experience with public housing. Two had positive experiences with Section 8 vouchers. Two other participants compared the public housing developments to prisons and noted that they were too strict; all participants complained about the restrictions both in terms of eligibility for public housing and the rules and surveillance once admitted. The focus groups were also in consensus that there is not enough public housing and waiting lists are so long or closed (in the case of Section 8) that they did not consider public housing as an option.

On the other hand, one participant in particular felt that public housing developments were not strict enough in their screening and contained a high concentration of illegal drug users and other criminals who were not taking responsibility for changing their lifestyles. Because of this perceived environment, she avoided public housing because she felt it would be hard to maintain her sobriety and commitment to a new lifestyle. Whether or not Providence’s housing developments contain concentrations of illegal drug users is unclear. Over the past ten years, statistics from PHA’s annual report show varying numbers of drug related evictions. While 14 percent (11) of evictions were drug related in 2003, there were no drug related evictions in fiscal year 2004. Without further study, it cannot be determined whether this decline is due to reduced drug activity or reduced enforcement.

Since funding of federal housing assistance has failed to keep pace with increasing demand, an estimated three-fourths of eligible households nationwide do not receive any housing subsidy or support. Public and Section 8 housing no longer have the resources or capacity to be the community’s safety net when the private market is unaffordable or unwilling to risk renting to individuals with criminal records or a history of substance abuse.

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Transitional & Permanent Supportive Housing

Transitional and permanent supportive housing are the two types of housing most utilized in model housing programs for people released from prison and those with criminal records. “Transitional” in this context refers to the transition from homelessness to stable housing, not the transition from prison to stable housing; in fact, no transitional housing in Providence is specifically earmarked for recently released prisoners. “Supportive” housing is usually for individuals with disabilities and/or drug problems, who, in many cases, have experienced chronic homelessness. Both types of housing provide a level of supportive services to help people maintain sobriety, learn life skills, connect to social services, maintain mental and other health care and sustain residential stability in general.

Unfortunately, Rhode Island is particularly lacking in its capacity to provide transitional and permanent supportive housing. The Providence 2000-2005 HUD Consolidated Report reported that an additional 176 beds for individuals and 307 units for families with children were needed to meet the current need for transitional housing. The estimated gap in permanent supportive housing is even greater: 1080 beds for individuals, and 707 units for families with children. With the affordable housing market declining and the number of people released from incarceration rising in the five years since these estimates were calculated, the need is undoubtedly much higher.

The transitional housing system in Providence is especially ill-equipped to receive the estimated 1,200 people released from state prisons each year. An estimated 15 to 27 percent, or 180 to 324 people returning to Providence, will be in need of transitional housing in order to avoid homelessness. According to a survey conducted of transitional housing providers, Providence only has about 379 beds of transitional housing. Of these, only 141 are not earmarked for specific populations (AIDS patients, veterans, domestic violence victims, etc.) or do not discriminate against individuals recently released from incarceration. And of these 141, 67 beds are for parents living with their children, rarely the case for recently released prisoners. This leaves only 74 beds of transitional housing that do not discriminate against single, recently released individuals. Although these beds are reasonably accessible to recently released single individuals.

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15 City of Providence. Consolidated Plan 2000-2005, June 2000. (See Table 1A, Homeless and Special Needs Population.) Accessed at: http://www.providenceri.com/government/public_notices/consolidated-plan-2000_2005.pdf. The counting methodology used in the Consolidated Plan is different than that used by the research team. As a result, the gap estimates from the Consolidated Plan should not be added to the capacity estimates given here to establish the projected total needs for transitional and supportive housing. See Appendix C for methodology and determination of reasonable accessibility to individuals with a criminal record.

As of the release of this report the Consolidated Plan 2005-2010 was available, but in draft form only.

16 This estimated percentage of returning prisoners returning to emergency shelters upon release is a finding that was presented as part of the Second Chance Act of 2004. Cited in: No Second Chance, p. 17.

17 See Appendix C for the detailed results of this survey.
beds are not discriminatory, they are not earmarked for recently released prisoners either; further, turnover in all transition housing programs is extremely slow because of the overall gap.

Restrictions placed on McKinney-Vento funds (also known as Continuum of Care funding), which fund many supportive and transitional housing programs, may make accepting people released from incarceration more problematic. These funds, intended for use only with homeless populations, include a definition of homelessness that excludes individuals soon to be released from incarceration. According to the Report of the Reentry Policy Council, some programs have worked around this restriction by referring people to emergency shelters prior to accepting them into transitional housing. Doing so, however, may put the recently released individual at greater risk of recidivism.

Supportive housing is equally under-resourced with only 450 beds in Providence. Of these, only 74 are not either earmarked for specific populations or do not discriminate against individuals recently released from incarceration. Of those 74 beds, 34 are specifically earmarked for recently released prisoners, but will probably lose that distinction soon. These beds, in a development on Mawney Street in Elmwood, are part of Rhode Island’s federally funded COMPASS reentry program. Under the grant, Amos House leased the building to provide permanent supportive housing for recently released offenders who were to be case managed by the Family Life Center. Due to the number of released offenders who met the eligibility criteria, but could not afford the rent without a subsidy, the program was also opened up to people with criminal records who may have been released several years earlier. Unfortunately, the grant did not fund case management for these residents, and as a result the property has not been a consistently stable housing site. It is unclear what will happen to the Mawney Street housing development when COMPASS funding expires on June 30, 2005.

18 42 U.S.C. § 11302(c) The statute states that the reference “[homeless individual] does not include any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained pursuant to an Act of Congress or a state law.” Accessed at: http://www.nationalhomeless.org/who.html.
20 See Appendix C.
21 To be eligible for the COMPASS program, participants must be returning to zip code 02905, 02907, 02908 or 02909. Participants must also be less than 35 years old and have been “released from a period of sentenced incarceration for either a violent, sex, breaking and entering, or a drug offense.” For COMPASS purposes, “drug offenses” do not include simple possession. Rhode Island Department of Corrections, “The COMPASS Project: Challenging Offenders to Maintain Positive Associations and Social Stability,” Description of Rhode Island’s Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative—a program of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, p. 16. Accessed at: http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/reentry/sar/pdf/wp1_ri.pdf.
22 Interview with Eileen Hayes (Executive Director, Amos House), May 5, 2005. Hayes mentioned that there has been a significant drug problem in the Mawney Street complex.
The number of Providence residents on probation or parole, a subset of those with criminal records, is an estimated 6,846, or 1 in 19 adults. Given the discrimination these people will face in accessing housing within the private housing rental market or from public housing due to their active supervision for a past criminal conviction, a significant percentage is in need of permanent supportive housing to address their disproportionately high incidence of substance abuse and mental illness, and there simply is not enough available.

Notably, there are zero permanent supportive housing beds for parents living with children that are reasonably accessible to individuals recently released from incarceration. There are, however, 61 beds of transitional housing for parents with children reasonably accessible to this population. Experience and anecdotes from focus group participants indicate that individuals returning from prison are more likely to be ready for family reunification at a time when they would be attempting to access permanent supportive housing, not transitional housing. The dearth of permanent supportive housing for individuals with criminal records desiring to live with their families must be addressed.

Figure 2-2; Providence Supply of Transitional Housing (TH) and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

*Based on an average of the range described on p. 27. See note 16.

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Focus group participants had few experiences accessing either transitional or supportive housing programs. They did, however, express concern that certain supportive housing developments discriminated against people with felony records:

Even Crossroads now, with the apartments they have...they do a BCI on you. If you got a felony you can’t go in there, and what is the purpose of that program? That’s what it’s supposed to be all about. Isn’t that what that program was put together to help?

Another respondent added, “So what’s gonna happen to all these people with felonies that have disabilities? What’ll happen to them?”

One focus group member who toured the project on Mawney Street was concerned about it becoming a template for ex-offender housing. Being an employed person with a criminal record, he was in need of supportive permanent housing and felt that the building was not set up to facilitate the kind of support he needed. Echoing this sentiment, Eileen Hayes, executive director of Amos House commented on the failure to provide case management to all Mawney Street residents. “The supportive services along with the monitoring services are key.... [Residents] must understand that they are connected to a program.”

Emergency Shelters

Demand for housing in Providence has outpaced supply, causing prices to increase and low-income families to be displaced into homelessness. In FY2004, Rhode Island emergency shelters housed an all-time high of 6,020 people, a 36% increase from three years earlier; 2,535 of these individuals came from Providence. Based on shelter surveys, 3.6 percent of individuals came directly from prison to the shelter. Additionally, 14.9 percent of individuals accessing a shelter had experienced incarceration within the previous six months, likely representing the number of people who often cycle between shelters, rooming with friends temporarily, and the prison system.

For those not affected by domestic violence, there are four emergency shelters available in or near Providence: Advent House and the three shelters administered by the Urban League (the Urban League Shelter, Welcome Arnold and Harrington Hall, the overflow shelter in Cranston, which is only funded during the winter). The total capacity is about 180 beds (plus 88 in the winter).

26 Ibid., p. 11.
28 See Appendix C.
Eight of the focus group participants had stayed in emergency shelters, but none had positive reviews. One said, “if it was warm out, I’d rather pitch a tent out in the woods somewhere,” and many agreed with this sentiment. A few focus group participants indicated that emergency shelters made remaining employed more difficult because of the shelters’ hours of operation. One participant stated that the shelter does not work for working people:

I work every day, so, I mean, I don’t want to get up at five o’clock in the morning and hang around three hours before I go to work and then maybe get a chance of getting back in there because I don’t get out of work ‘til seven or eight at night.

Another indicated that the combination of open hours and limited bed space seemed to impose a choice between retaining work or shelter:

I worked with the person at the shelter place, but that was useless.... I wasn’t guaranteed a bed so if I went to work, then it was either go to work and stay up all night to go to work the next day, or not go to work and go to the shelter....

When discrimination and a lack of transitional and private market options force working people with criminal records into emergency shelters, their employment and other life areas can become destabilized. Respondents also indicated a lack of pro-social activities to counterbalance this destabilization: “there’s no kinds of programs in these shelters.”

Private Rental Housing Market

The housing market in Providence has undergone a dramatic shift over the last eight years as neighborhoods across the city have been gentrified. Prices for multifamily homes alone rose 230 percent between 1995 and 2003. In 2003, prices increased 41 percent, then another 37.6 percent in the first half of 2004 alone. These exponential increases, the fastest in the nation, have directly translated to rising rental prices that are displacing low-income families. The average rent for a studio apartment in 2003 was $697, an 11 percent increase from 2002. During the same year, median income statewide only increased a marginal one-half percent. As a result, people are doubling up and committing a greater share of their income to pay for rent, often being forced to sacrifice food, health care, utilities and other necessities.

These market pressures have created an owners’ market; demand is so high that owners have the leverage to not only raise rents, but also to choose “low risk” tenants from a larger pool of interested applicants. Owners, acting within the market’s logic, are destined to consider the financial stability and criminal history of potential tenants.

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30 Rhode Island Housing, “Quarterly Rent Survey of Newspaper Rental Listings.”
32 16 percent of housing units in the Making Connections neighborhoods were overcrowded compared with only 8 percent of Providence housing units. US Census.
of prospective tenants. People released from prisons and those with a record are now facing more than the expected unwillingness to rent to "ex-offenders" because the severity of discrimination intensifies as the market tightens.

Rhode Island’s Fair Housing Practices Act assures equal access to housing for nearly every minority group with a history of discrimination:

All individuals regardless of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, country of ancestral origin, or disability, age, familial status, or those tenants or applicants, or members of a household, who are, or have been, or are threatened with being, the victims of domestic abuse, or those tenants or applicants who have obtained, or sought, or are seeking, relief from any court in the form of a restraining order for protection from domestic abuse, equal opportunity to live in decent, safe, sanitary, and healthful accommodations anywhere within the state in order that the peace, health, safety, and general welfare of all the inhabitants of the state may be protected and insured.  

While these groups have supposedly been afforded equal opportunity to housing, disproportionate rates of blacks and Latinos with criminal records mean disproportionate rates of housing discrimination and homelessness.  

As a result of not being a protected class, people with criminal records face legal discrimination in the private rental housing market. All but one focus group participant attempted to obtain housing in the private market during their housing search and they all had been turned down at least once because of their criminal record. Many reported that landlords ask for background criminal investigations: “a criminal record in the state of Rhode Island...just try to get a house...landlords want BCI checks.” Another participant reported about the private rental listings and landlords’ unwillingness to rent to someone with a criminal record: "there’s a lot of dead ends.”

One focus group participant recently released from prison knew that his criminal record would make owners wary of renting to him. In order to counter skepticism, the participant prepared a portfolio of certificates from treatment, educational, and employment programs he had completed to demonstrate his commitment to living a clean and sober life, but still faced discrimination: “I’m doing the footwork that I’m supposed to be doing to maintain on the straight path...and here I am; I’m struggling, getting the doors slammed in front of my face because I have criminal charges.”

Other participants expressed frustration with seeing out-of-state property owners deciding whether they could live in their own neighborhood: “A landlord from out of state has no conception of what the community is about; what the person is about; they’re just in it for the almighty dollar.”

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33 Rhode Island General Laws, § 34-37-1, Section (b).
34 Emergency Shelter Report 2004, p. vii. “Black people in the state had a rate of shelter use this year of 21.9 per 1000 compared to 3.5 per 1000 for Whites. ... Hispanics had a rate of 11.3 per 1000.”
Housing advocates define housing as affordable when it costs no more than 30 percent of a household's income. In tight housing markets like Providence, even middle-income families are paying more than that. Affordability for focus group participants (including the family members of incarcerated individuals, who responded on their own behalf) ranged depending on current levels of income, but in all cases were below market rate rents in the private market:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideal Monthly Rent</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$50</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100 - $200</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$400 - $500</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$600 - $700</td>
<td>3 (1 of whom needs three bedrooms for $700 total)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The degree of legal discrimination faced by people with criminal records because of not being a protected group in Rhode Island’s Fair Housing Practices Act has resulted in some of the very conditions that the statute wanted to guard against:

[Discriminatory] practices tend unjustly to condemn large groups of inhabitants to dwell in segregated districts or under depressed living conditions in crowded, unsanitary, substandard, and unhealthful accommodations. These conditions breed intergroup tension as well as vice, disease, juvenile delinquency, and crime; increase the fire hazard; endanger the public health; jeopardize the public safety, general welfare and good order of the entire state; and impose substantial burdens on the public revenues for the abatement and relief of conditions so created.35

Beyond the overwhelming and seemingly unavoidable barriers to securing housing in the private market, there have been signs that certain private property owners would be willing to house people with criminal records if a program could help facilitate and screen tenants. Research needs to be conducted about whether the number of owners who would be willing to join such a program is significant enough to warrant the initial program development costs.

35 Rhode Island General Laws, § 34-37-1, Section (a).
Correctional Institutions as Housing

In light of the limited availability of housing for people with criminal records, Rhode Island’s Adult Correctional Institutions are perceived to be, and have ultimately become, a state subsidized form of housing. Several focus group respondents indicated that they or people they knew had purposely utilized the prison as a form of housing—especially during the cold winter months when the emergency shelters are often full. (See Chapter One.)

When considered as a punitive form of fully state subsidized housing, correctional institutions rival the PHA in capacity as a housing development for low-income Providence residents, especially for single men. Rhode Island’s correctional institutions house approximately 3,200 men and 300 women at any given time, including nearly 1,000 individuals from Providence. 36 By comparison, the PHA provides 1,400 units to families, and there are only an estimated 1,000 total units of emergency, transitional and supportive permanent housing available in Providence.

The research team does not mean to suggest that all prisoners committed their crimes in order to satisfy their housing needs, or that people in prison prefer their confinement to other housing options. Rather, the team wants to point out that prisons are fully state subsidized institutions that house individuals who are at risk of homelessness, and prisons represent a rare type of housing that does not discriminate against people with criminal records (in fact, past convictions make incarceration all the more likely).

Beyond the realization that the state is already subsidizing the potential housing needs of thousands of residents through its prisons, there are also consequences for the assessment of housing demand in Rhode Island. Unless we take into consideration what the housing needs of people in prison will be upon release, we are potentially diluting our estimates of shelter, transitional, and permanent housing needs by up to 3,500. Since these people are in the prison when shelter populations are tabulated and Census statistics are recorded, the base populations of the neighborhoods where these people will return are erroneously reduced. Failure to take the incarcerated population into account makes housing pressure in the state appear less dire than it would be without the prison. In fact, the prison as housing reduces the homeless population requiring emergency shelter and those who might otherwise place strain on the often already overcrowded housing of family or friends.

36 Rhode Island Family Life Center analysis of Rhode Island Department of Corrections: data files of sentenced and supervised offenders (June 30, 2004).
Conclusion

Together, legal discrimination and heightened demand severely restrict people with criminal records from accessing public housing, transitional and supportive housing, and rentals in the private housing market. Emergency shelter and correctional institutions are the only two housing systems that do not discriminate in policy or practice against the formerly incarcerated.

Unfortunately, emergency shelters and prisons are the least constructive environments for people with criminal records. Frequently excluded from more supportive housing options, people with criminal records are more likely to live in crowded or substandard conditions, face extended periods of homelessness, and find it hard to build a stable life—factors that together make their re-incarceration and the negative collateral consequences for their family, children, and community, all the more probable.
“We are here to stay.”
Towards Stable and Safe Communities: Recommendations for Preserving, Stabilizing and Expanding Housing for the Formerly Incarcerated

Section Summary

Rhode Island is experiencing a housing crisis; there is not enough affordable housing for all low-income residents, formerly incarcerated or not. Immediate action must be taken around the housing needs of ex-prisoners, but the recommendations in this section must be viewed and enacted collectively, and within a comprehensive plan to solve the crisis for all.

Programs must be developed and policies changed to prevent discrimination against ex-prisoners and to mitigate the perceived risk that formerly incarcerated tenants pose to housing providers. Further, we need programs to support families who want to welcome formerly incarcerated relatives home without incurring undue risk. Finally, Rhode Island must expand its stock of low-income housing while giving special attention to developing housing for ex-prisoners.

Rhode Island’s Housing Crisis

Rhode Island has one of the tightest housing markets in the country, and as employment opportunities and wages fail to keep pace with housing prices, it is only getting tighter. Over 97,000 households (including nearly 40 percent of all renter households) are feeling the housing crisis directly, as they are paying monthly rent or mortgages that are too high for their income. These families are sacrificing food, clothing, transportation, medical care, and other necessities to maintain their living situations. More than 50,000 of these households are spending over half their income on housing.\(^1\) According to Affordable Housing for Rhode Island, a study commissioned by the Woonsocket Neighborhood Development Corporation (WNDC), for all Rhode Islanders to be paying a fair price by 2010, the state needs to subsidize or lower rent for 50,000 households and develop 18,498 affordable units and 18,498 new market-rate units.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Eric Hangen et. al., for the Woonsocket Neighborhood Development Corporation and the Housing Network of Rhode Island, Affordable Housing for Rhode Island: Goals for Cities, Towns and Regions to: Build their Economy, Help their Neediest Neighbors, Support their Workforce and Grow Smart, Community Development Consulting, 2004, p. 30. The study explains the housing crisis in detail, correlating it with projected job and population growth.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 6.
Providence bears the greatest share of the burden; the study prescribes that, by 2010, 7,720 existing units of housing must become affordable while the city needs 4,788 new units of affordable housing and 4,788 new units of market-rate housing. As a greater number of low-income individuals and families contend for the same housing, providers (be they landlords, Community Development Corporations or the Public Housing Authority) must pick and choose between prospective tenants, and they have the luxury of choosing those who they perceive to pose the least risk. As documented in the previous chapters, they often discriminate against the formerly incarcerated and their families. They choose one group of low-income tenants over another, based on differing relations to the criminal justice system. The first set of recommendations seeks to work directly against discrimination and to mitigate the perceived risks posed to housing providers by the formerly incarcerated and their families. Included among these are recommendations to stabilize the current housing options of ex-prisoners, as well as recommendations to support family reunification and the ability of families to house members returning from prison.

However, any solution that simply makes existing affordable housing more available to the formerly incarcerated may have the unintended consequence of displacing the risks associated with unstable housing from one group of low-income people (those who have been or are justice-involved) to another (those who have not been justice-involved). We must not pit the interests of these two interrelated groups against each other. To permanently solve the problem of housing instability among the formerly incarcerated, Providence will need to develop more affordable and non-discriminatory housing for all, as well as supportive and transitional housing for the formerly incarcerated. This will lower the burden that expanded opportunities for the formerly incarcerated may place on the market for those not involved in the criminal justice system. The second set of recommendations below seeks to create new housing resources for all low-income Rhode Islanders, with special attention to the formerly incarcerated.

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3 Ibid., p. 7.
Interested Parties

Who is responsible for implementing these recommendations to meet the housing needs of the formerly incarcerated? Some of the recommendations target particular organizations or sets of organizations. However, some of the programmatic recommendations could be undertaken, funds permitting, by any organization with a stated interest in successful prisoner reentry and/or creating safer communities by increasing the supply and quality of low-income housing. Presently, not one agency or group is responsible for ensuring that people returning from prison, or those with criminal records, are able to find appropriate housing.

In other words, the targets of these recommendations include (but are not limited to) all levels of government, discharge planning (the Department of Corrections), probation and parole (the Department of Corrections), shelters, transitional housing providers, supportive housing providers, private landlords, community development corporations (as well as the property management associations that they employ), the local housing authorities, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and anyone interested in funding programs aimed at addressing this issue.

Auxiliary Concerns: Strategy and Practicality

For each of these entities, however, there are factors that limit their ability to implement the recommendations that apply to them. Discharge planning agencies are responsible for making a plan with individuals prior to release, but have few or no resources to help those same individuals realize those plans after release. In addition, since discharge planning is a function of contracted non-profits, they are usually powerless to influence and coordinate release from prison with probation or parole officers. To implement changes, discharge planning entities would need funding and/or appropriate institutional change within the Department of Corrections. Probation and parole ostensibly promote rehabilitation and protect communities by preventing recidivism. However, caseloads are too high for officers to do in-depth planning for housing.

To do better in this regard, probation and parole would require a serious reorganization of resources within the Department of Corrections. Similarly, shelters, supportive housing providers and transitional housing providers would need more resources, either through independent funding and/or policy change, in order to provide more services or increase capacity. Finally, policy change in local housing authorities could, depending on its scope, be an internal decision or set at the federal level by HUD. Congress would have to budget increased resources for housing authorities, but such a change would only affect recently released felons if accompanied by a change in discriminatory policies.

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Effective Case Management and Meaningful Family Reunification

A strategy to make stable housing available to ex-offenders must include some combination of the following recommendations. However, the research team overwhelmingly recommends that any programmatic plan incorporate intensive case management for former prisoners and their families. To work, the programs described below will need a component to ensure that individuals and families maintain sobriety, healthy relationships, and employment, and have support if they falter. In addition to providing this support, case managers can train clients to negotiate the exigencies of housing—teaching everything from financial literacy to neighborliness. Finally, case managers can serve as references and mediators if relations between tenants and housing providers are strained. Additionally, whenever possible, case management should include the facilitation of family reunification. Family reunification is a good indicator for long term housing stability even when the formerly incarcerated individual is not necessarily moving in with family. Whenever mentioned below, case management should be taken, ideally, to include all of these components. The research team believes that any good-faith effort to confront the problems described in this report must include case management and, when possible, family reunification.
**Recommendations I:**
**Ending Discrimination, Mitigating Risk,**
**Stabilizing Current Options, and Supporting Families**

**National Policy**

1. **Oppose the cuts to public housing—Section 8 vouchers in particular—in the President’s current budget proposal.** Because of inadequate funding for the voucher program in last year’s budget, HUD recently informed local housing authorities that 2005 funding would be below levels needed to maintain current levels of assistance. Although the Administration’s 2006 budget proposal purports to undo half of the reduction in 2006, it cuts $3 billion from other housing programs. After 2006, under the current proposal, funding for all low-income housing programs, including Section 8, will continue to plummet.\(^5\) The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that if the current proposal goes into effect, 1,073 Rhode Island families will be dropped from housing assistance by 2010.\(^6\) Although much public housing is closed to those with criminal records, opposing this budget proposal is crucial. Any further limits on the general availability of public housing will tighten the market for all low-income Rhode Islanders, including the formerly incarcerated, who may, because of legal discrimination, bear the brunt of any further strain on the market.

2. **Support the Federal Second Chance Act.** In April of 2005, Representatives Rob Portman (R-2\(^{nd}\)/Ohio) and Danny K. Davis (D-7\(^{th}\)/Illinois) reintroduced the Federal Second Chance Act (H.R. 1704), “a bill to reauthorize the grant program of the Department of Justice for reentry of offenders into the community, to establish a task force on federal programs and activities relating to the reentry of offenders into the community.”\(^7\) The bill was first introduced in the 108\(^{th}\) Congress. Among its many provisions, the bill makes funds available to both states and local agencies for services and programs facilitating safer prisoner reentry. The bill is currently in the House Judiciary Committee and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

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3. **Pass legislation to alter HUD and Public Housing Authority policies regarding individuals with criminal records.** As noted, the PHA, the largest low-income housing provider in Providence, is subject to restrictive guidelines set at the federal level, and, in some instances, uses even more severe policies to discriminate against individuals with criminal records. These policies, ostensibly developed to increase public safety, must be reconsidered in light of their actual effect on individuals and the families and communities to which they return. Actions can be undertaken both at the federal level (HUD and Congress) and at the local level (local public housing authorities). The U.S. Congress must repeal the outright bans on public housing for certain types of offenders, and Congress and HUD must require housing authorities to individually evaluate each applicant with a criminal record.

**State and Local Policy**

4. **Oppose the passage of bills in Rhode Island that would make it harder for individuals with criminal records to find and maintain secure housing.** There are three bills currently under consideration in the Rhode Island State General Assembly that would require landlords to be notified when their tenants are on community confinement, increasing the likelihood of discrimination. Release to community confinement is contingent upon having a place to stay. Thus, these measures would threaten the integrity of the community confinement program and delay the release of the eligible until they can be released for time served without the guarantee of having found housing in advance. S0240 and H5700 would require leaseholders placed in community confinement to notify their landlord. S0572 is even more restrictive, requiring leaseholders to notify landlords when anyone (whether or not they are on the lease) living in the unit is on community confinement. S0572 is particularly threatening to the prospects of family reunification, which, as discussed, is often the best hope that ex-prisoners have for secure housing. The act also threatens the relative security of couch-surfing, which, although not the most stable housing option, keeps individuals from living on the streets or utilizing shelters.

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5. **Support the passage of bills in Rhode Island that would address homelessness.** There are three bills currently under consideration in the Rhode Island State General Assembly that would appropriate resources for the state to examine and fight homelessness. H5385 (The Housing First, Ending Homelessness Initiative) and H5793 (The Shelter to Housing Program) would create a program, administered by the Office of Homelessness and Emergency Assistance within the Housing Resources Commission, designed to move homeless individuals and families from shelters into rental housing. H5298 would appropriate $350,000 for the Housing Resources Commission to continue to administer the Supportive Services Program, which aids in the prevention of homelessness.

6. **Consider amending Rhode Island's Fair Housing Practices Act to limit consideration of a criminal record by landlords.** Rhode Island’s Fair Housing Practices Act was enacted to protect individuals from being denied equal opportunity due to their race, gender, sexuality, and other real or perceived differences. The Act states that, "In order to aid in the correction of these evils [segregation, homelessness, crime, etc], it is necessary to safeguard the right of all individuals to equal opportunity in obtaining housing accommodations free of discrimination." Racial and gender disparities among those released from prison and with criminal records become disparities in housing discrimination and homelessness. As a result, the equal opportunity intended by Rhode Island’s Fair Housing Act is unachievable. The state should consider including people with criminal records as a protected class.

7. **Pass legislation to protect those who are evicted for short term incarcerations.** Many focus group participants reported being evicted by private landlords on short notice pursuant to short-term incarcerations, for such offenses as non-payment of court fines. Such actions already constitute a violation of a landlord’s legal obligations to give sufficient time, notice and reason for eviction. However, legislation to make this an expressed component of Rhode Island’s housing laws would make landlords think harder about breaking the notification laws.

8. **Pass legislation to protect families that are evicted because of a relative’s incarceration.** Family members in our focus groups also reported being evicted because of landlord suspicion after a relative’s arrest. Again, such actions by a landlord are already illegal, but proactive legislation to protect the rights of family members of the incarcerated would specifically codify such violations.

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9. **Offer tax credits, rent assistance or bonding to landlords willing to rent to individuals on welfare and ex-offenders in particular.** Landlords perceive formerly incarcerated tenants as both a safety risk and an economic risk. To allay these fears, state government could offer property tax credits to landlords willing to rent to this population or rent assistance to the formerly incarcerated who do find a landlord. Such a program could operate as a locally administered, non-discriminatory version of the housing assistance voucher program (Section 8). Alternately, in the spirit of the Federal Bonding Program, which provides an extra level of insurance to employers willing to hire “at-risk” job seekers, a bonding program around housing could reduce the perceived risk of renting to individuals with criminal records for private landlords and management companies.

10. **Upon release, allow individuals to use earnings in their commissary account for housing costs.** Currently, prisoners on the brink of release cannot count on the funds they have in their commissary account being available to them for the payment of a security deposit and/or first month’s rent. Rather, these funds are often diverted for payment of court fines. The result is usually demoralization and a guarantee that former prisoners will be less able to secure rental housing shortly after release.
Institutional/Program Policy and Recommendations for New Programs

11. **Create or expand housing counseling and tenancy education programming at emergency shelters with a view to successful housing placement.** Many focus group participants reported leaving emergency shelters without finding stable housing and unable to mount an effective search. Shelters need funding to provide more programs that facilitate the entry of the homeless into the housing market.

12. **Support families that may be evicted due to income loss or discrimination after the incarceration of a loved one.** The consequential punishment of families is one of the ways that incarceration impacts community safety. Families need access to programs to give them mental and material support, including, but not limited to, counseling, job training, landlord mediation and rent assistance.

13. **Reorganize probation, parole and discharge planning to better support the formerly incarcerated in their search for housing.** As of December, 2003, the average probation caseload in Rhode Island was 286, more than double the national average of 133.10 Also, most discharge planning at the ACI ends after release. These institutions, which fall under the Division of Rehabilitative Services, are “committed to the meaningful reintegration of offenders into the community.”11 To fulfill this commitment, the division and the discharge planning agencies need the funds and support to provide meaningful and effective case management before and after release, particularly for housing. Furthermore, parole and probation officers must be aware of, and prepared to mitigate, the landlord suspicions (for both supervisees and families) that their presence might ignite during a home visit. “The focus of the parole field has shifted from linkages to services to monitoring and enforcement,” and this shift must be reversed because research indicates that strategies that balance surveillance and treatment are the most effective at changing behavior and reducing crime.12

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14. In partnership with the PHA and prisoner reentry programs, a family reunification program should be developed to allow people released from prison to live with family already admitted to public housing. Stephen O’Rourke, Executive Director of the PHA, expressed interest in the Family Reunification and Employment Program that the Hartford, Connecticut Housing Authority has developed. The program targets “at-risk” young fathers and facilitates their ability to become sober and employed, and reintegrate with their families in a positive way. The program does not specifically target ex-offenders, but its structure and successes are encouraging signs that a public housing authority can allow case managers to work with specific individuals in their developments.

15. Create a family reunification program for ex-offenders whose families do not live in public housing. As discussed in this report, former prisoners with families that are willing and able to support and house them are often more successful in the long run. Such a program could identify offenders who have family that: 1) is willing and able to house them; or 2) is unwilling and/or unable. For those in the latter category, the role of a case manager would be to provide support and/or facilitate the repair of damaged relationships that might make a family reticent to house a loved one returning from prison. In all cases, the program’s goal would be to provide consistent counseling and resources to families as well as ex-offenders as they negotiate the difficulties of the reentry period.

16. Consistently evaluate and document programs that are developed around housing for ex-prisoners. In order to assure sustainability and adaptability, programs should document and collect data in order to facilitate internal assessment, evaluation, recidivism analysis, and applications for future funding.

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Recommendations II:
Expanding Housing Resources

1. **Build new low-income affordable housing that is not discriminatory.**
   Again, the affordable housing shortage must end, and new developments, whether built through traditional public housing or other initiatives, must not discriminate against those with records and must be willing to work with programs for ex-prisoners to create safer communities.

2. **Pilot an innovative transitional housing program for individuals released from incarceration that demonstrates how the provision of housing in a pro-active manner can reduce recidivism.**
   According to research on recidivism, the first year after release is the most important time period for providing support to individuals at risk of re-incarceration. Within that year, the first three months are even more critical. Current housing systems, as this report documents, are designed in a reactive fashion offering the least stable housing first, and more supportive housing only upon evidence of desistance from drugs or crime. Reactive systems, however, have less of an impact. By not providing support and services during a released individual’s most critical period, the housing system waits to see whether the person will succeed or fail. A recent New York City study found that risk of recidivism increases 17 percent for those who end up in emergency shelters upon release. Providing services pro-actively to individuals immediately after release will likely be more effective at reducing recidivism.

Such a program should include: an emergency rent support fund; supportive and holistic case management; support for family reunification where possible; life skills and budgeting workshops; pro-social activities (sports, education, hobbies, etc); employment training and placement services, and tenant’s rights training.

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3. **Expand the number of transitional and permanent supportive housing units to appropriately meet the need.** Currently, the lack of transitional and permanent supportive housing means that many individuals with criminal records must “select” prison as their housing “option”. Given the expensive ($35,000/yr) cost of housing an individual at the prison, and the resulting discrimination made all the more likely by a prison sentence, the state and its taxpayers should support transitional and permanent supportive housing, which are more cost-effective. Because of their inherent instability, shelters make finding employment, reunifying with family, and maintaining sobriety all the more difficult.

We recommend that the advocacy organizations working with the formerly incarcerated, homeless, and affordable housing providers research the number and type of units needed for people released from prison and those who are currently homeless due to discrimination because of their record. The proper mix of transitional and supportive housing must also be determined.

In 2000, the City of Providence’s HUD Consolidated Plan estimated the unmet gap in transitional housing for individuals to be 176 units for individuals, and 307 units for persons in families with children.\(^\text{16}\) The unmet gap in permanent supportive housing was 1080 beds/units for individuals, and 707 beds/units for persons in families with children.\(^\text{17}\) With a tightening housing market and more people being released from prison, we estimate the overall need to be twice this number.

With demand adequately assessed, a cost comparison can be conducted to test the cost-effectiveness of transitional and supportive housing compared to the correctional and social costs of recidivism, incarceration, and the collateral consequences. This analysis should then form a basis for these advocacy groups to pressure state government and broad-based housing coalitions to housing for the formerly incarcerated in long-range plans for affordable housing development.

Finally, case management in these units should be well equipped to address co-occurring disorders and issues related directly to past criminal activity and incarceration.


\(^\text{17}\) Ibid.
4. **Support legislation to expand the funding for the Neighborhood Opportunities Program.** H5175 and S0651, currently under consideration, would increase funding for the Neighborhood Opportunities Program to $7.5 million.\(^{18}\) The program works in Rhode Island’s deteriorating neighborhoods to produce affordable housing for families, produce permanent supportive housing and foment neighborhood revitalization through grants to community organizations.

5. **Support legislation to provide funds to community development corporations building affordable housing, and make sure that they build housing that is open to individuals with criminal records.** H5358, currently under consideration, would establish a community development corporation fund in order to provide supplemental funding to nonprofit organizations building affordable housing. While this legislation is vital, it is also necessary to guarantee that community development corporations will not build discriminatory housing with any funds appropriated through the act.

6. **Foster and act on the willingness of community development corporations to develop supportive and affordable housing options for formerly incarcerated individuals and their families.** In conversations with various representatives of CDCs, there seems to be enthusiasm to address the severe gap in affordable and supportive housing for individuals with records and their families. Government has a role to fund new developments and their companion services, but CDCs must be willing to take the lead in demonstrating that neighborhood safety is enhanced when individuals with criminal records – many of whom also have substance abuse and mental health needs – have a more stable housing environment that provides holistic, pro-social support.

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7. **Establish an authority to coordinate the development of housing for the formerly incarcerated.** We recommend that the Governor’s Steering Committee on Corrections Reform and Prisoner Reentry establish a single authority to coordinate and spur development of appropriate community-based housing options for individuals released from prison, on probation or parole. Such an authority could be developed alongside, and in collaboration with, the reformed Division of Rehabilitative Services described in Recommendation I-13. Knowing the challenges and discrimination that people with criminal records face when trying access housing, the state’s investments in supervising probationers and parolees seem unproductive when stable housing appears to be as much, if not more, of a deterrent than supervision itself. Rhode Island spends $9 million annually on supervising how well probationers and parolees succeed or fail (50% are re-incarcerated within 3 years; 33% do so in the first year alone), when just $5 million could be used to double funding for the Neighborhood Opportunities Program. Rhode Island’s housing organizations must begin considering former prisoners seriously as they assess the needs of low-income residents. An authority properly empowered could foment this shift.

8. **Give the parole board power to fund transitional housing so that more are eligible for parole.** Prisoners in Rhode Island cannot be released on parole without proof of secure housing upon release. As a result, most must wait to be released on probation, at which time they have no institutional mandate to find housing. If the parole board were able to fund transitional housing, parole—and the attendant housing security—would be a more viable option for more individuals. If the parole board has the authority to deny parole and spend taxpayer dollars to continue a term of incarceration (at $35,000 per year) it should have the power to spend money to support its decisions to release individuals otherwise suited for parole.
Appendix A
Focus Group Procedure and Participants’ Backgrounds/Histories

Section Summary
This appendix describes how focus group participants were located and gives an overview of participants’ backgrounds, recent housing history, recent correctional history as well as their locations. For information on participants’ family situations, see Chapter One, page 12.

The research team strongly suggests reading this section, as it provides more context for the analysis in Chapter One and the recommendations in Chapter Three.

Focus Group Procedure

Focus groups met in two groups of nine, one week apart, for two hours each, in December of 2004 at the Family Life Center. Participants received 50 dollars for their time and were solicited through flyers posted at the Family Life Center’s Resource Center, community centers and shelters on the Southside of Providence. Also, Family Life Center clients and volunteers were encouraged to attend and to spread the word. While the flyer indicated that participants would be compensated, it did not say how much. Prospective participants either responded by telephone or came to the Family Life Center for brief interviews to establish that they were in the target group before being told how they would be compensated.

Backgrounds of Focus Group Participants

The 18 respondents consisted of 15 formerly incarcerated individuals and three family members of inmates (two current, one former).1 One such respondent was a woman whose daughter was currently incarcerated; one was a woman whose partner was currently incarcerated, and one was a man whose father had been incarcerated. For some questions, these participants were asked to answer on behalf of their relative; for other questions they were asked to answer for themselves, and some questions, these three did not answer. Of the 15 formerly incarcerated individuals, eleven were men and four were women. Of the 18

1 Many formerly incarcerated respondents also had formerly or currently incarcerated relatives.
respondents, eight were African-American, eight were white, and two were Hispanic. Respondents ranged in age from early 20s to late 50s, and one respondent was a Family Life Center volunteer. The majority of respondents had seen our flyer at local shelters. Some respondents heard about the focus groups from Family Life Center clients and/or volunteers. Some respondents in the second focus group heard about it from participants in the previous one. Certain questions were only asked at the second focus group, which consisted of eight former inmates and the one man whose father had been incarcerated. This group consisted of seven men and two women.

Recent Housing and Correctional History of Focus Group Participants

The first series of questions established where respondents were living immediately before their most recent incarceration (12 of the 15 formerly incarcerated respondents were repeat offenders), how long their most recent period of incarceration at the ACI was, where they lived immediately after being released from prison, how long they’ve been out and where they currently reside. For all but two of these questions, the three respondents who were family members of the incarcerated responded on behalf of their incarcerated relative. The first exception was the question, “What is your current housing situation?” For this question, we wanted to understand the relative stability of housing both for individuals who have been incarcerated and for individuals who might have experienced auxiliary consequences from the incarceration of a family member. We also wanted to understand how many of our participants call the Making Connections Providence target area home. Thus, all participants, regardless of criminal record, answered this question on their own behalf.

Housing Situation of Focus Group Participants Before Most Recent Incarceration

Eight individuals reported that they (or their incarcerated family member) were living in a homeless shelter before their most recent incarceration. Five reported that they were living with family. Two reported renting at market rate. One reported living in public housing and one reported couch surfing.

Length of Most Recent Incarceration

Seven individuals reported that they (or their incarcerated family member) spent less than one month at the ACI during their most recent incarceration. One individual spent between one and six months at the ACI; two spent between six months and one year at the ACI; four spent between one and three years at the ACI, and four spent more than three years at the ACI. Responses to this question from family members of the currently incarcerated were based on the amount of time they expected their loved one to serve.

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2 For this document’s definition of “living with family,” see Chapter One, p. 10, note 7.
3 For this document’s definition of “couch surfing,” see Chapter One, p. 10, note 8.
Housing Situation Immediately After Most Recent Release From Incarceration

Six individuals reported that they (or their incarcerated loved one) lived in a homeless shelter immediately after their release from the ACI. Five reported couch surfing. Three reported living with family. One reported living in transitional housing, and one reported being a market rate renter (in this case, living with family in a permanent manner). Responses were not collected regarding the two respondents whose family members were currently incarcerated.

Time Since Most Recent Release From Incarceration

Six respondents reported that two or more years had passed since their most recent release from the ACI. Four reported that between one and two years had passed. Four reported that between three months and one year had passed, and two reported that three months or less had passed. This question was not applicable for the two respondents whose family members were still incarcerated.

Current Housing Situation of Focus Group Participants

Finally, people explained their current housing situation. For this question all participants responded on their own behalf. Seven were living at a homeless shelter. Three were couch surfing. Three were living in some form of subsidized housing (section 8, supportive or transitional). Three were renting at market rate (including the two individuals with a currently incarcerated family member), and two were living with family (including the individual whose father had been incarcerated).

Housing/Correctional Trajectories

In addition to the questions about their recent history, the eight formerly incarcerated respondents in the second focus group were asked about their housing situation before their first incarceration, allowing these trajectories to be determined. Note that only two respondents (D. and E.) experienced anything that could be considered a positive trajectory. D. moved from living with family and friends as an imposition to living in subsidized housing, and E. entered prison as a couch surfer but is now in transitional housing. Only one of the formerly incarcerated respondents from the first group reported any upward mobility during the period from before her most recent incarceration to the current time. Again, data was not formally collected on this groups’ housing status prior to their first period of incarceration. However, many anecdotally described downward or static trajectories similar to the ones in figure A-1.
### Geographical Position of Focus Group Participants

Thirteen of the eighteen respondents live in the Making Connections Providence target area. This figure excludes those who are currently in a shelter in the Making Connections area but plan someday to move to a different neighborhood and includes those who are in shelters outside of the Making Connections area but plan to move back there. Two respondents live in Providence, but not in the Making Connections area. Two respondents live in Rhode Island’s urban core, but not in Providence (although they are currently in a shelter in the Making Connections area), and one respondent was from suburban Rhode Island (but is also currently in a shelter in the Making Connections area). For these questions regarding geography, all participants were asked to respond on their own behalf.
Appendix B
Additional Focus Group Experiences and Perspectives on Housing

Section Summary
This section includes information from the focus groups not included in any of the previous chapters. This section consists primarily of notable quotes not recorded elsewhere in the report.

Drug Use/Mental Health

Fourteen respondents reported that they were abusing alcohol and/or marijuana in the month prior to their most recent arrest. Eleven reported using harder drugs in the month prior to their most recent arrest. Eight had a prescription for some type of mental health medication at the time of their most recent arrest and four of them were not receiving said medication.

Respondents on Housing, Incarceration and Eviction

One respondent reported that the Housing Authority tried to evict his father from projects after his arrest but did not succeed.

“I went down for [a crime]; that jeopardized my child, myself, my housing…they got rid of me.”

One respondent who defaulted on his mortgage payments while in jail, resulting in the eviction of his family reported, “I had a house in ______ that I used to rent out and then I lived in one….. I got busted; they put my bail at 50k with surety; I couldn’t come up with it, so I spent 76 days in incarceration until I could get the bail lowered…. I lost my home…. The mortgage has gotta be paid.”

On Leaving Prison and Making Plans

“‘You’ll be back,’ [the guards] said.”

“I had a concrete plan, but it just didn’t work out….I’ve been homeless pretty much since I got out.”
On Housing Discrimination

“You take down numbers, you call…you try. But, you go over there and they take one look at you and they say, ‘I already rented it,’ you know, excuses.”

“That’s the catch, it’s the first, last, security they want.”

“I had an incident at ____ …. I was saving money. I was living at _____, and they even gave me a hard time. So I was living at ______... before [my most recent incarceration], and I had a letter that I was a good tenant and everything like that.... I was on the waiting list for a couple of months, y’know, and I seen people in the building that I knew they were using and I knew they had records and all that. Y’know I was on the straight and narrow, y’know I had been clean and sober for almost a good year. So I was doing all the footwork; I had all my certificates like this man had right here [indicating another respondent], and I made copies for them…also I had my own folder with my own things in it, and the lady was very, very rude, even before she found out I had a record so I went there and I had seen her two or three times but one day I went there…I told her I had the money; I had six thousand dollars. She said, ‘oh yeah, we can even get you an apartment; we got some studios; do you mind studio?’  ‘I said no, I don’t mind anything, you can put me in a shoebox right now....’ She said just come in tomorrow and we’ll show you the apartment and everything, so I went there the next day and she said, ‘well we have a problem,’ I said, ‘what?’ She says, ‘It’s your BCI; you got some charges on there right?’ because I have two drug delivery charges. I said, ‘yeah, that was many many years ago,’ which it was; I would say about seven years ago and one was ten years ago..... I went there all dressed up in my Sunday best and everything, and I told her, ‘yeah, I’ve gotten help; I’ve gone to programs I have it all documented, y’know I have certificates from Talbot house outpatient in the jail parenting groups, all different kinds of programs, anger management, everything, and she says, ‘well you have to have documentation for that.’ I said, ‘yeah, I do, it’s right in your file. If you see, I made you copies.’ She goes, ‘well y’know we’re a private industry and we’re a private management company.’ They’re not HUD or Providence Housing; they said their company’s from California. I said, ‘well I don’t even get a second hearing or anything like that?’ She goes, ‘no.’ What could I do?”

“You can move into a place and once you’re there…you have no control over what the landlord says after that; he can come in at any point and raise your rent, put all kinds of rules and regulations on you…. You can’t have no house guests.” (It is illegal in Rhode Island for landlords to raise rent without at least 30 days notice or to place such restrictions on tenants.1)

---

On the Risks Associated with Unstable Housing and Unemployment

“I was homeless…. I used to buy my dope off a friend of mine… it’s a vicious cycle.”

“Everybody who was doing the drug stayed at the hotel with me.”

“[A friend of mine] was found in [an abandoned] house on ____ Street, frozen to death…. Maybe he had a hard time getting an apartment because of his charges.”

“I’m scared [a crime] might be committed against me.”

“[My housing situation] makes me feel like I’m gonna hurt somebody.”

“It demoralizes you.”

One respondent, a seasonal worker who was laid off for the winter and expects to work again in the spring remarked, “Even me, I’m laid off now…It’s frustrating because now, you gotta go look again. Because I don’t like to sit back and wait for a check to come in the mail and whatever, unemployment or whatever, but now I gotta go on the street and look again, and I’m getting too old; my bones can’t take it no more. It’s cold.”

“You become dismayed, confused, frustrated.”

“My mom was a crack addict when I was a kid…10 or 11 years old…. They call the sheriffs when your rent’s delinquent and they take all your stuff and they only give you, like, a day to get all your stuff out. We had so many problems, like my uncle was in jail, my mom was missing, my grandma had no car. They didn’t care; we like wrote letters and called them and talked to them. They wouldn’t do nothing; how could you not do nothing for like some ten year-old kid?”

“It’s just a matter of time before I do something because I’m not gonna keep going this way.”

“When you can’t pay your rent, it’ll make you wanna do something…especially when you have children.”
On Available Housing Options

“There’s no kinds of programs in these shelters.”

“When you have housing, no matter what your situation is, it gives you a sense of calm.... When you live in your own home, the freedom, the joy, the pleasure that you get, is immense. When you live with somebody, it is a delicate balancing act. You know, you don’t wanna step on anyone’s toes.... It becomes stressful.... It’s when I’m staying with friends, family, and other places because you don’t want to be an imposition.... You can be paying half the rent and still feel like you’re leeching off somebody.”

“If it was warm out, I’d rather pitch a tent out in the woods somewhere [than live in a shelter].”

On Learning to Deal With Housing Providers While Growing Up

“My mom, with dealing with landlords, you had to have a certain attitude.... You couldn’t not know what the next thing to say was because they’ll just be like this nigger don’t know what the fuck he’s talking about.... So I had to be like, ‘I’m calling my uncle; my uncle’s a lawyer, my uncle’s a cop....’ Lying to them, like, ‘[pull] something, and I’ll just nail you.’”
Appendix C
What’s Accessible:
Emergency, Transitional and Supportive Housing Programs in Providence and their Policies Regarding People with Criminal Records

Section Summary
This section presents basic information on 13 organizations providing emergency, transitional, and/or supportive housing in Providence or the immediate vicinity. Chapter Two of this report uses the findings of this section. Totals are on page 65.

Methodology
Information was collected via phone surveys with representatives of each of the organizations listed below. In cases where programs provide housing for families, the research team estimated the number of children being served to attain total capacity. Estimations were based on number of bedrooms in family units and the assumptions that siblings sometimes share bedrooms and that some families have only one parent.

Reasonable Accessibility to Recently Released Individuals with Criminal Records
Nearly all programs below have some kind of screening procedure, which may include Background Criminal Investigations. Programs were not considered reasonably accessible if:

- They did not admit individuals with violent charges less than five years old, including breaking and entering. (About 34% of people released in Rhode Island in 2003 were violent offenders.¹)

- They did not accept people with “long drug histories.” (About 22% of individuals released in 2003 were drug offenders, but nationally 80% of all prisoners have a history of substance abuse.²)

• They had a target population other than or more specific than: the homeless, substance abusers and/or the recently released. Some programs, such as AIDS Care Ocean State or Nickerson House Gateway to Independence, had few blanket restrictions against the formerly incarcerated, but are so highly targeted that they could not be considered generally accessible to individuals returning from prison.

• For family programs that were reasonably accessible, only beds for parents were considered accessible.

*Reasonably Accessible Does not mean “Open”*

The term “reasonably accessible” is meant simply to denote that a program has no blanket screening policies that would apply specifically and prohibitively to the average individual who has recently been released from a term of incarceration. For the following reasons, programs that are reasonably accessible should not be mistaken for programs that are entirely or specifically open to former prisoners:

• Many programs considered reasonably accessible do consider criminal history when reviewing applicants; a record is not categorically prohibitive but, depending on its contents, can be a hindrance.

• Given the overall need for more transitional and supportive housing, many individuals, some with records and some without, are competing for the same beds.

• Turnover rates in all of the programs are extremely low.

**Abbreviations Used in this Section**

| acc = accessible | emgcy = emergency | mos = months | supp = supportive |
| apt = apartment   | fam = family      | yrs = years  | trans = transitional |
| asst = assistance | indiv = individual | prog = program | treat = treatment |
| bdrm = bedroom   | m = men           | res = residential | w = women |
| c = children     | mgmt = management | sltr = shelter | wks = weeks |
| conf = confidential |                |                |                |

Notes on information presented in the table appear on page 65.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Site</th>
<th>Total Beds</th>
<th>Emgcy Shelter Beds</th>
<th>Trans Housing Progs</th>
<th>Supp Beds</th>
<th>Turnover</th>
<th>Prog</th>
<th>Target Population, Restrictions and Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Beds</td>
<td>Length</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reasonably Acc to Formerly Incarcerated?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advent House</td>
<td>~170</td>
<td>12 m</td>
<td>64 m/w</td>
<td>2 yrs</td>
<td>~72 m/w/c</td>
<td>Usually at capacity. Case mgmt</td>
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<td>Elmwood</td>
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<td>Transport to services</td>
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<td>Advent II: 30 m</td>
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<td>Linwood: 16 m/18 w</td>
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<td>Mostly indivs with mental health and drug</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No sex offenders; no arsonists. For indivs</td>
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<td>with violent charges, charges must be at</td>
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<td>least 5 yrs old.</td>
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<td>Must have been sober 90 days if coming from</td>
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<td>a prog; 180 days if coming from the street.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Not Reasonably Acc</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIDS Care Ocean State</td>
<td>~126</td>
<td>~54 m/w/c</td>
<td>~120 m/w/c</td>
<td>18 mos</td>
<td>~120 m/w/c</td>
<td>Usually at capacity. 42 person waiting</td>
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<td>Congregant Care Prog: Elmwood</td>
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<td>list for supp housing, and little turnover</td>
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<td>Sunrise House: Hope</td>
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<td>Room asst</td>
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<td>HUD-funded units: Pawtucket</td>
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<td>Health care asst</td>
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<td>Apts scattered throughout RI, 65% in</td>
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<td>Not Reasonably Acc</td>
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<td>Providence</td>
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<td>Fams and indivs affected by HIV, that are</td>
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<td>low-income by HUD rule.</td>
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<td>No one who has previously been evicted from</td>
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<td>AIDS Care housing.</td>
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<td>AIDS Care doesn’t require BCI checks, but</td>
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<td>doesn’t allow child abusers and rarely has</td>
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<td>people coming directly from prison.</td>
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<td>Sobriety required.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amos House</td>
<td>~120</td>
<td>~54 m/w/c</td>
<td>54 m/w</td>
<td>Sltr: 21 m/13 w</td>
<td>Sltr: 3 mos</td>
<td>Usually at capacity. Homeless individuals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper South Providence, Elmwood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>68 m/w</td>
<td>5 Fam Apts: ~20 m/w/c</td>
<td>Apts: 18 mos</td>
<td>Maintains a waiting list. Formerly</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>One building in Silver Lake</td>
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<td>Sltr: 3 mos</td>
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<td>incarcerated get priority, but this may</td>
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<td>end with expiration of SVORI funds.</td>
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<td>No blanket restrictions, but screening, indiv</td>
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<td>assessment and sobriety required.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>~42 Trans Beds; 68 Supp Beds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Site</td>
<td>Total Beds</td>
<td>Emgcy Shelter Beds</td>
<td>Trans Housing Progs</td>
<td>Supp Beds</td>
<td>Turnover</td>
<td>Prog</td>
<td>Target Population, Restrictions and Comments Reasonably Acc to Formerly Incarcerated?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Crossroads Rhode Island**  
Family Trans Prog: scattered throughout Providence  
Supp Housing: Upper South Providence | ~226 | ~50 m/w/c  
18 two bdrm fam apt | 2 yrs | 176 m/w  
Apts: 152 m/24 w | Case Mgmt | Fam trans prog:  
For fams with one c or two c of the same gender.  
No blanket restrictions, but thorough screening.  
For supp housing:  
Homeless, and able to prove it.  
No sex offenders; no violent offenders; no indivs with a “long drug history”. | |
| **Interim House**  
East Side | ~18 | ~21 m/w/c  
6 fam apt | 6-8 wks | Usually at capacity  
Serves roughly 60 fams (205 indivs)/yr | Case mgmt | Homeless fams with c.  
No blanket restrictions, but screening required.  
Some institutional caution of “shelter hoppers.” | ~27 Trans Beds |
| **McAuley Village/ McAuley Community House**  
Village: Elmwood  
Community House: Washington Park | ~120 | ~114 w/c  
McAuley Village: 23 single parent fam apt | 2 yrs | 6 m/w  
McAuley Community House: 3 m/ 3 w | Case mgmt | Village:  
Single mother fams committed to working on their goals. M not barred from village, but few have ever lived there.  
House:  
Homeless single indivs.  
No blanket restrictions, but screening required, and serious violent offenders may have a hard time. | 23 Trans Beds; 6 Supp Beds |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Site</th>
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<th>Trans Housing Progs</th>
<th>Supp Beds</th>
<th>Turnover</th>
<th>Prog</th>
<th>Target Population, Restrictions and Comments Reasonably Acc to Formerly Incarcerated?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nickerson House Gateway to Independence Olneyville</td>
<td>~59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Homeless veterans who were honorably discharged. No sex offenders; no blanket restrictions on violent offenders, but as a rule of thumb, charges must be 5 yrs old. Screening and 30 days sobriety required. Not Reasonably Acc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow House Upper South Providence</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recovered/recovering substance abusers. No BCI, but residents vote; may consider violent crime detrimental and favor indivs who had drug treat. 18 Trans Beds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter Services Tanner House Upper South Providence</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No blanket restrictions, but thorough screening. 10 Trans Beds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sojourner House Sltr location conf; offices in Smith Hill</td>
<td>~12</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>W and their c in danger of domestic violence. No blanket restrictions, but screening. Not Reasonably Acc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Site</td>
<td>Total Beds</td>
<td>Emergency Shelter Beds</td>
<td>Trans Housing Progs Beds</td>
<td>Supp Beds</td>
<td>Turnover</td>
<td>Prog</td>
<td>Target Population, Restrictions and Comments</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Turning</strong> Smith Hill</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12 m/w 6 m/6 w</td>
<td>Case by case; stays range from 6 mos to 2 yrs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Always at capacity</td>
<td>Case mgmt Sober trans house with treat and support</td>
<td>Homeless indivs recovering from substance abuse. No blanket restrictions, but screening. <strong>12 Trans Beds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban League of RI</strong> Urban League Emgcy Sltr: Upper South Providence</td>
<td>~167 (+88) m/w/c</td>
<td>~167 (+88) m/w/c</td>
<td>Average stay of singles: 6 mos Average stay of fams: 1 mo Overflow only open in winter. Funding requested for every “extra” mo they remain open</td>
<td></td>
<td>See Chapter 2 for info on number of unique indivs served by Prov. slts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Homeless. No sex offenders. <strong>~167 (+88) Emergency Beds</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women's Center of RI</strong> Sltr location conf; offices on East Side</td>
<td>Conf</td>
<td>~24 w/c 20 fam beds 4 indiv beds</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conf</td>
<td>Case Mgmt</td>
<td>W and their c in danger of abuse. No child abusers. Screening and 90 days sobriety required. <strong>Not Reasonably Acc</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Transitional” refers to the transition from homelessness to stable living. Most of these programs have a time limit and a very particular timeline for their programming. “Supportive” refers to permanent supportive housing, low-income housing with consistent case management. No programs had comprehensive turnover data; most simply gave us their best estimate. All housing providers reported that turnover is extremely low in permanent supportive housing. Welcome Arnold, although in Cranston, has been included as a housing resource for the city of Providence because clients and providers report that many individuals who spend time there are actually from Providence; many go directly from prison to Welcome Arnold. Harrington Hall, although in Cranston, is the overflow emergency shelter for Providence. Rhode Island Department of Corrections, Annual Report 2004, (Planning and Research Unit: Pastore Government Center, Cranston, RI), p. 6. These figures include some prisoners from other states being held in RI. Accessed at: http://www.doc.state.ri.us/pdf/2004/2004AnnualReport.pdf. Providence Housing Authority, “About PHA.” Accessed at: http://www.pha-providence.com/about.html.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Emgcy Shelter Beds</th>
<th>Trans Housing Progs</th>
<th>Supp Beds</th>
<th>Turnover</th>
<th>Prog</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Totals</td>
<td>~1009 (+88)</td>
<td>~180 (+88)</td>
<td>~379</td>
<td>~450</td>
<td>Generally low</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>Totals for supp housing exclude units outside of Providence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonably Accessible to Recently Released Prisoners</td>
<td>~400 (+88)</td>
<td>~180 (+88)</td>
<td>~141</td>
<td>~74 for indivs</td>
<td>Generally low</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>~67 for parents living with their c</td>
<td>0 for indivs with their c</td>
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<td>~74 for indivs</td>
<td>34 for the recently released</td>
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<td>Public Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>RI Department of Corrections²</td>
<td>3624:</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>~3500 indivs through the system every yr. ~1200 return to Prov.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Indivs convicted of a crime and sentenced to incarceration; indivs awaiting trial</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3382 m/</td>
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<td>242 w</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providence Housing Authority⁹</td>
<td>&gt;5700 in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Low; See Chapter 2 for more information on wait for public housing.</td>
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<td>6 family developments</td>
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<td>Public Housing</td>
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<td>7 elderly/disabled high rises</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&gt;2500 fams in Section 8</td>
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<td>246 scattered site homes</td>
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<td>~2000 Section 8 Vouchers</td>
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<td>Highly Restrictive; see Chapter 2 for details.</td>
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</table>