

January 2020

# 2020 NEW YORK HOUSING & JUSTICE SYSTEM *Change Platform*



## **ABOUT THIS PLATFORM**

This platform was produced with the generous support of Trinity Church Wall Street to help guide New York City leadership in better aligning housing resources for justice impacted populations. The platform will examine the various initiatives and efforts happening across the City and State and guide stakeholders in removing barriers and reallocating resources away from crisis services, and towards effective housing solutions like supportive housing for people with a history of justice, healthcare, and homeless system cycling. The contents reflect the views of the author(s) and does not represent an endorsement by Trinity Church Wall Street.

## **ABOUT CSH**

CSH is the national champion for supportive housing, demonstrating its potential to improve the lives of very vulnerable individuals and families by helping communities create over 335,000 real homes. CSH funding, expertise, and advocacy have provided \$1 billion in direct loans and grants for supportive housing across the country. Building on nearly 30 years of success developing multi and cross-sector partnerships, CSH engages broader systems to fully invest in solutions that drive equity, help people thrive, and harness data to generate concrete and sustainable results. By aligning affordable housing with services and other sectors, CSH helps communities move away from crisis, optimize their public resources, and ensure a better future for everyone. Visit us at [csh.org](https://www.csh.org).

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# Introduction

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New Yorkers exiting prison and jail, as well as those in the parole and probation system, face countless barriers to successful community reintegration, with access to housing being paramount. People in the justice system face housing barriers such as discrimination, affordability, and lack of access to supportive services. Multiple studies have demonstrated the power of housing to promote stability, improve connections to health and behavioral health services, reduce recidivism, and end institutional cycling. Without access to appropriate housing and necessary services, these New Yorkers are at an increased risk of recidivism and homelessness, and many get stuck in the expensive and traumatizing cycle of long-term homelessness and incarceration, which can cause their mental health to deteriorate.

A lack of affordable housing has been incredibly evident amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, during which COVID-19 began spreading through Rikers Island and other city jails. According to New York City’s Board of Correction, there were 256 incarcerated people, or 6% of the total population of incarcerated people, with confirmed COVID-19 cases in September 2020.<sup>1</sup> While the Mayor and Governor have made some efforts to release “vulnerable” people that are incarcerated serving City sentences or are incarcerated due to alleged violations of their parole requirements, the question remains: where will these people go who do not have stable housing upon release? Congregating in shelters or living on the street puts people at increased risk of COVID-19. More than ever, having a safe, stable home not only promotes one’s personal health but improves public health as a whole. It is imperative that housing, especially affordable housing development, is maintained during this time. Housing solves expensive crises across multiple systems and supports our most vulnerable populations already disproportionately impacted by COVID, especially Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) who are justice impacted.

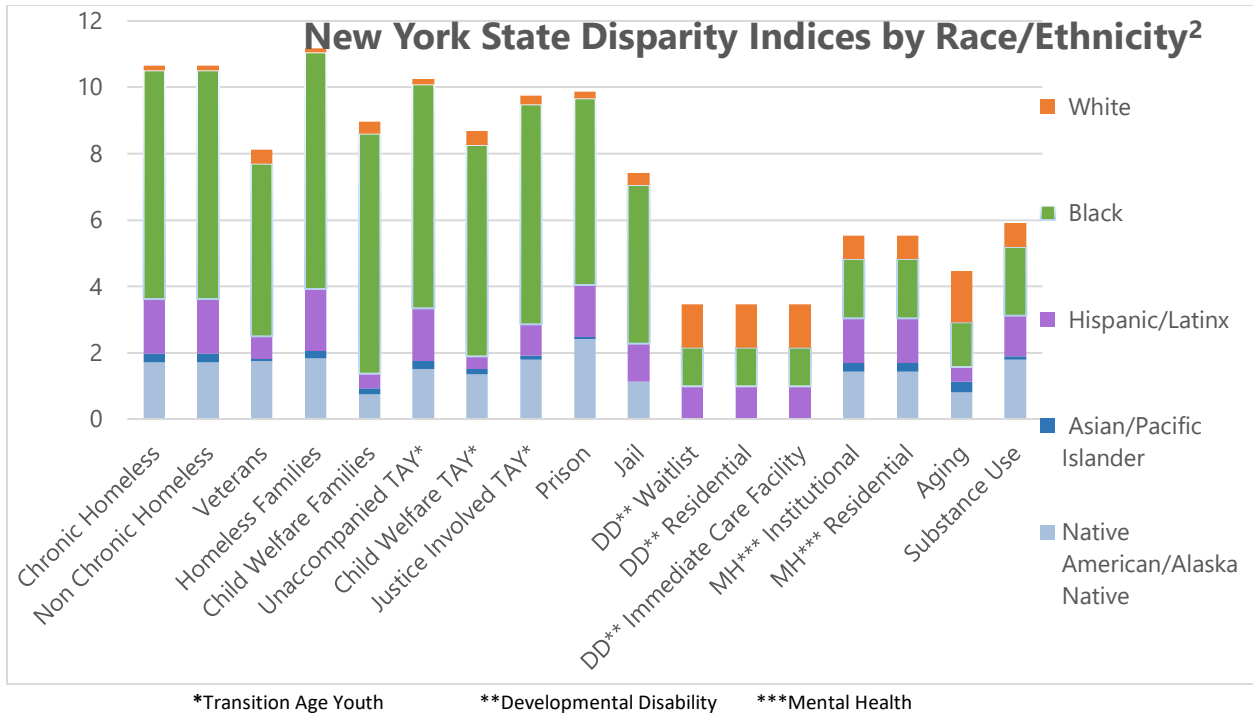
## RACIAL DISPARITIES AND INEQUITIES AMONG JUSTICE AND HOMELESS POPULATIONS

There are significant racial disparities for BIPOC across multiple public systems in New York due to historic and systemic racism and marginalization. BIPOC, especially the Black community, are overrepresented in crisis and institutional systems, like the homeless and justice systems, yet underrepresented in other areas that provide social benefits, including the mental health system. CSH’s Racial Disparities and Disproportionality Index (RDDI) tool<sup>2</sup> (see below) highlights these racial disparities and inequities across 17 unique systems and categories in New York and measures whether a racial and/or ethnic group’s representation in a particular public system is proportionate to, over, or below their representation in the overall population. The information outlined in the RDDI for New York reaffirms that, at a systems level, the City and State must move beyond silos between agencies and systems – guided by transparent data – to address inequities with purpose and center race equity.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/boc/downloads/pdf/covid-19/BOC-Weekly-Report-9-5-9-11-20.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.csh.org/supportive-housing-101/data/>



### HOUSING AS A SOLUTION

Given all the local efforts and momentum of the last few years, focusing on housing as a solution to health, including the historic racial justice protests that began this summer and continue, CSH sees an opportunity to push for policy changes that will allow for greater access to supportive housing for justice impacted individuals, with a focus on BIPOC communities, as well as creating a better, coordinated system to access housing.

CSH sees key opportunities for New York that will help people in the justice system, specifically BIPOC, access the housing services they need to promote their health, wellbeing, and stability in their community.

- ✓ **Bridge the gap between justice and housing advocacy groups and city agencies**
  - Through data-sharing, de-siloing of systems, and focus on equity and health
- ✓ **Prioritize supportive housing for the justice impacted population**
  - Increase provider capacity to serve and house this population and advocate for increased funds to provide intensive services
- ✓ **Advance equity through program expansion, policy changes, and overall strategies**
  - Decrease existing barriers to accessing housing, provide community-wide education, and advocate for changes in regulation

# Housing works to reduce homelessness and recidivism for people who are justice impacted

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This first section provides a brief overview on the rates of homelessness for this population and why ‘Housing First,’<sup>3</sup> particularly supportive housing,<sup>4</sup> helps to reduce homelessness and recidivism for people who are impacted by the justice system.

## Homelessness & Housing Instability

Housing is critical to ensuring the health and wellbeing of people who have been formerly incarcerated, as they are almost 10 times more likely to be homeless compared to the general public.<sup>5</sup> Rates of homelessness are highest for people who have been incarcerated more than once, people recently released from prison, people of color, and women. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, 203 out of every 10,000 formerly incarcerated people were homeless and nearly three times as many – 570 out of every 10,000 – were housing insecure.<sup>6</sup>

According to the State of the Homeless 2020 report by the New York Coalition from the Homeless, around 20,000 single adults become homeless and enter the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter system each year. People without housing being released from State prison is a large contributor to homelessness among institutionalized populations. Between 2015 and 2018, more than 15,000 people were sent to City shelters by the state prisons and at least 1,900 additional people who received treatment for mental illness while incarcerated entered shelters directly from City jails between 2015 and 2018, according to data tracked pursuant to the *Brad H. v. City of New York* settlement.<sup>7</sup>

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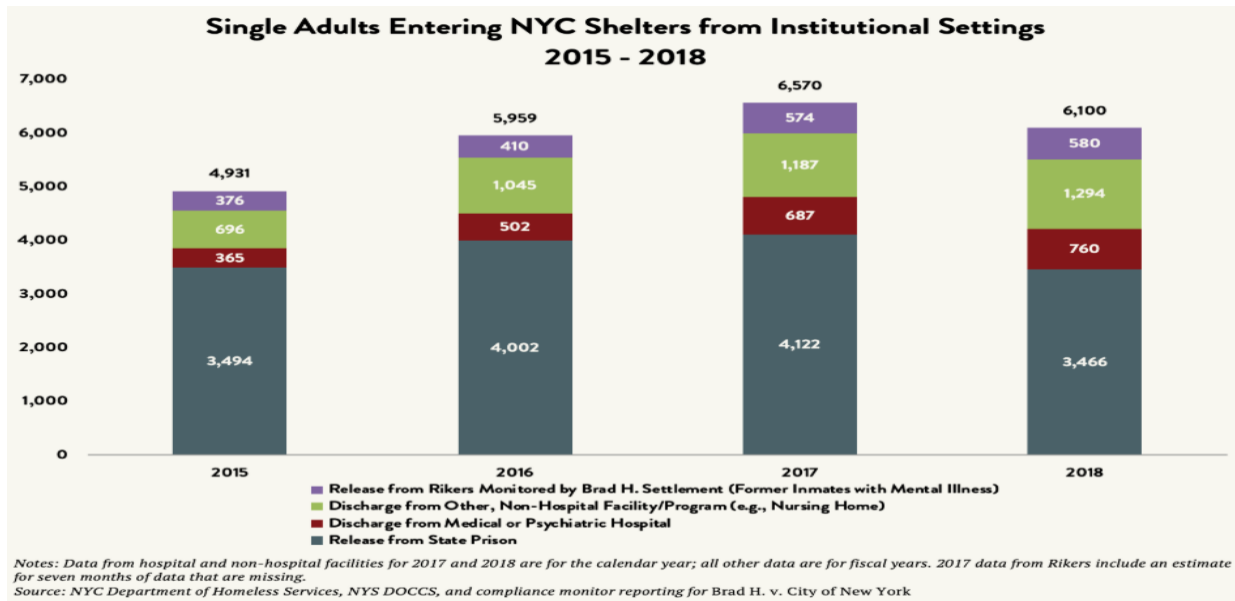
<sup>3</sup> Housing First aims to quickly and successfully connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions or barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment or service participation requirements.

<sup>4</sup> Supportive housing provides supportive services so that people live and thrive in their communities just like any other New Yorker, and it is co-developed with affordable units for the community. It stabilizes people and communities, and serves as an economic generator.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html#raceandgender>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html#raceandgender>, Figure 3

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/state-of-the-homeless-2020/>



If people do not have a home upon release and do not enter the shelter system, many go to three-quarter houses, which can often times be destabilizing for individuals leaving the justice system. These three-quarter houses are similar to shelters, as they are often overcrowded and offer a temporary stay, but unlike shelters in that they have little regulation and oversight. Over the last few years, many three-quarter house residents are being displaced due to a vacate order issued by a City agency for foreclosure action and are eligible for the City’s new emergency measure called Special Exit and Prevention Supplement, a rental subsidy to prevent people from entering the shelter system.<sup>8</sup>

People experiencing homelessness prior to incarceration or who are unable to return to the place they once lived upon exiting incarceration are now caught in a “Catch 22”: they find the doors to housing closed at every turn and are denied this basic need because of their criminal justice history.<sup>9</sup>

### Why the Housing First Approach Works

‘Housing First’ is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centers on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional supports and services as needed.<sup>10</sup> The basic principle of ‘Housing First’ is that people are able to take better care of themselves, make improvement in their lives, and accomplish their goals if they are first housed. When people who are leaving incarceration are stably housed, they have fewer non-violent offenses, helping them stabilize their lives in the community.<sup>11</sup> The two common program models that follow the ‘Housing First’ approach are **permanent supportive housing** and **rapid rehousing**. This paper will specifically highlight the benefits of permanent supportive housing for individuals who are

<sup>8</sup> [https://d155kuxnf1aozz.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/ReentryHousingPlatform\\_Final\\_9.15.15.pdf](https://d155kuxnf1aozz.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/ReentryHousingPlatform_Final_9.15.15.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Place\\_to\\_Call\\_Home\\_FINAL-08142017.pdf](https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Place_to_Call_Home_FINAL-08142017.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.homelesshub.ca/solutions/housing-accommodation-and-supports/housing-first#:~:text=The%20basic%20underlying%20principle%20of%20Housing%20First%20is, and%20addictions%20issues%20as%20it%20is%20for%20anyone.>

<sup>11</sup> <http://fchonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Housing-First-for-the-Criminal-Justice-Population.pdf>

experiencing homelessness, have an incarceration history, and have complex social and behavioral health needs.

Housing First is a proven model in reducing homelessness and has been applied nationally. Between 2009 and 2019, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing used a Housing First approach that reduced homelessness among veterans by 50%.<sup>12</sup>

### Supportive Housing as a Solution for People with Complex needs

Some people are able to get “back on their feet” and obtain housing upon release with family support, financial benefits, and other resources. But many are not able to do this without strong support services, especially people in this population who suffer from mental illness. According to the Council of State Governments Justice Center, 16.9% of adults in a sample of local jails had a mental illness – that is three to six times the rate of the general population. Additionally, while the serious mental illness rate was 14% for men, it was 31% for women.<sup>13</sup> As of October 2020, there were 2,364 people, or 52.4% of the population, with a Brad H designation, according to NYC DOC system.<sup>14</sup> Given the ongoing trauma, structural racism, behavioral health needs, and lack of family supports, many people being released from jail or prison, or those who have been formerly incarcerated, would benefit from supportive housing. Ongoing research indicates that supportive housing promotes wellbeing and stability in the community, while also being cost-effective.

The key components of quality supportive housing<sup>15</sup> allow people to thrive and integrate into their community. While one of the key components of supportive housing is that services are voluntary, most tenants work with their case managers to find employment, connect to physical and behavioral healthcare, integrate with their community, and establish relationships with family members, while consistently ensuring that their housing is safe and maintained.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/we-can-end-homelessness-through-housing-first-interventions>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/blog/addressing-mental-illness-criminal-justice-system>

<sup>14</sup> <https://greaterjusticenyc.org/nycjail/>

<sup>15</sup> [https://d155kunxf1aozz.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/CSH\\_Dimensions\\_of\\_Quality\\_Supportive\\_Housing\\_guidebook.pdf](https://d155kunxf1aozz.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/CSH_Dimensions_of_Quality_Supportive_Housing_guidebook.pdf)





## Supportive Housing Benefits: Reductions in Jail Use, Connection to Services, and Overall Cost Reduction

### Reduction in Jail Usage and Connection to Services

CSH’s NYC Frequent Users Systems Engagement (FUSE) II, which was piloted about 12 years ago, showed positive outcomes for people who were housed in supportive housing. FUSE II was able to identify the highest utilizers of jail, shelter, and healthcare system use, and assist them in stabilizing their lives through engagement in supportive housing services. The FUSE pilot was proven to significantly decrease shelter, hospital, and jail stays, which resulted in an overall reduction of public costs related to those services. A few key points from the FUSE evaluation that was conducted by Columbia University Mailman School of Public Policy were<sup>16</sup>:

1. **Housing Stability:** At 12 months, over 91% of FUSE II participants were housed in permanent housing, compared to the 28% of the comparison group who was not housed by FUSE.
2. **Jail Use:** FUSE II participants spent 19.2 fewer days incarcerated, a 40% reduction over the comparison group.
3. **Homeless Shelter Use:** On average, FUSE II participants spent 146.7 fewer days in shelter than did comparison group members.
4. **Behavioral Health:** The FUSE II program had a significant and positive effect on substance use outcomes for FUSE II participants. The percentage of FUSE II participants with any recent use of hard drugs (heroin, cocaine, crack, methamphetamine) is half as high as the comparison group and current alcohol or substance use disorder is one-third less for FUSE II participants at follow-up than among comparison group members. This is despite similar histories for FUSE II participants and the comparison group of chronic, relapsing addiction and recent substance use treatment. Additionally, compared to the comparison group, FUSE II participants scored

<sup>16</sup> [https://d155kunxf1aozz.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/FUSE-Eval-Report-Final\\_Linked.pdf](https://d155kunxf1aozz.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/FUSE-Eval-Report-Final_Linked.pdf)

significantly lower on a measure of psychological stress and higher on measures of current family and social support, factors associated with improved social functioning among those with mental illness.

Overall, the FUSE II intervention was highly effective in accessing and maintaining permanent housing for FUSE II program participants. Rates of 12-month and 24-month success in maintaining housing are higher than seen in other supportive housing interventions for persons with complex histories of homelessness and behavioral health needs.<sup>17</sup>

## Cost Reduction

Justice impacted individuals who do not have access to permanent housing are often cycling between shelters, jails, and hospitals. Not only is this cycle re-traumatizing and negatively impacting their health and wellbeing, but the systems also take a toll on costs.

Examples in NYS, NYC, and across the country have shown supportive housing to reduce public expenditures. The 2013 NY/NY III Interim Report found that when placing individuals in supportive housing, there is an average annual savings of \$1,298 in jail costs per person; the cost is even greater when looking at chronically homeless adults with behavioral health needs at an average savings of \$1,776.<sup>18</sup> After a two year-follow up of the NYC FUSE program, evaluators found that FUSE participants spent significantly fewer days in jails and shelters and engaged in less cycling between public systems. FUSE produced cost savings for crisis services and each person housed through FUSE generated \$15,000 in public savings, paying for over two thirds of the intervention cost.<sup>19</sup>



Aidala, A., McAllister, W., Yomogida, M., Shubert, V. (2014) *NYC Frequent User Service Enhancement 'FUSE' Initiative Evaluation Report*. Retrieved from [http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/FUSE-Eval-Report-Final\\_Linked.pdf](http://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/FUSE-Eval-Report-Final_Linked.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [https://d155kunxf1aozz.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/FUSE-Eval-Report-Final\\_Linked.pdf](https://d155kunxf1aozz.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/FUSE-Eval-Report-Final_Linked.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> <https://shnny.org/images/uploads/NY-NY-III-Interim-Report.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.csh.org/resources/the-nyc-fuse-program-evaluation-snapshot/>

# NYC Housing Options and Challenges for the those who are Justice Impacted

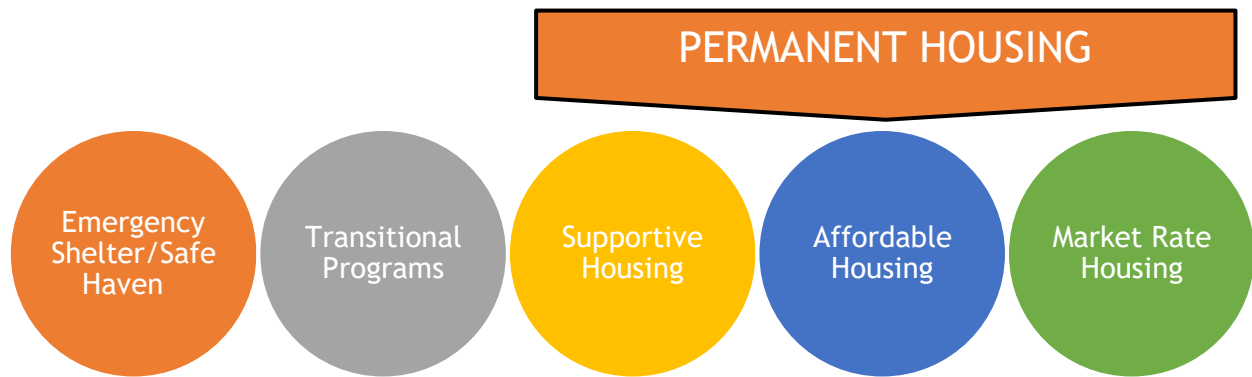
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This second section describes what housing is available, along with current barriers, for people in NYC who are in the justice system.

## Housing Options

Justice and housing advocates are fighting for access to affordable, permanent housing. People being released from jails and prison require a permanent safe place to live upon discharge. Permanent housing allows for people to have a home, without the worries of being “kicked out” or “timing out.” It allows people to manage their care more effectively, and helps people access community resources and connections needed to thrive in their community.

NYC has a large emergency shelter system, but the demand for permanent housing placement from shelter is extremely high. Now, there is also more competition for permanent housing as more individuals from institutional settings such as hospitals, nursing homes, state psychiatric hospitals, jails and prisons, given the COVID-19 pandemic, are entering the community. In such a tight housing market, people with justice histories continue to face barriers accessing permanent housing.



## Challenges Accessing Permanent Housing

We know that housing, particularly Housing First, provides a springboard for people who were formerly incarcerated to find jobs, obtain education, and participate in treatment. While there have been many efforts in NYS and lots of advocacy to increase access to housing for justice impacted individuals, there

continue to be barriers that prevent people from accessing that housing. Some of the main barriers that remain are (1) criminal background checks for market rate/private housing, (2) inability to access public housing, and (3) limited access to supportive housing that is tailored for this population.

## CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR PRIVATE HOUSING

While NYS's laws to prevent discrimination against people with criminal records in employment have existed for decades, there are no protections for people seeking housing, other than housing funded by NYS.<sup>20</sup> At this time, landlords can refuse to rent apartments to anyone who has ever been convicted, even if it was a minor offense or happened several years ago. The John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity, through its Fair Chance for Housing Campaign, continues to advocate for NYC legislation and policy reform to change this. The Campaign focuses on banning criminal background checks to ensure that those in need of housing are not being discriminated against. Not only do landlords refuse to rent to those with justice histories, they also routinely leverage convictions – or even just arrests or police activity, in general – to initiate eviction proceedings.<sup>21</sup> City Council is currently considering the Campaign's legislation, #2047-2020,<sup>22</sup> that would remove existing barriers for people with criminal convictions when applying for an apartment within the private market. According to a study of recently incarcerated people and their families conducted by The Center for Human Rights (2015), 79% of survey participants were either ineligible for or denied housing because of their own or a loved one's conviction history.

## UNABLE TO ACCESS PUBLIC HOUSING

As NYC continues to live in an affordability crisis, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) housing is one of the few options that remain for permanent, stable housing for low-income New Yorkers. NYCHA has recently taken a step towards promoting reentry by revising their admission policy so that a single violation conviction no longer creates an automatic bar, starting the ineligibility "clock" at time of release from jail or prison, and by looking at whether the exclusion period has been met at the time that a person reaches the end of the waiting list rather than at the time of application. NYCHA also continues to manage the Family Reentry Program, although it is seeking funding to support the nonprofit service providers supporting the participants.<sup>23</sup> However, NYCHA still continues to bar thousands of people based on prior arrests and convictions, per its current admission policies. The mandatory ineligible timeframes and exclusions make it incredibly difficult for individuals to reunify with their families upon release. Mandatory ineligibility timeframes and permanent exclusions undermine successful reentry by making it difficult for people to reunify with their families. Family involvement and reunification is a key success factor for those who are impacted by the justice system to remain housed and reduce recidivism. In the

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.fairchancehousing.org/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.opportunityhome.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Criminal-Justice-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4624864&GUID=727F0B98-C1D6-4A6D-A12B-53356D35C065&Options=&Search=>

<sup>23</sup> [https://d155kunxf1aozz.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/ReentryHousingPlatform\\_Final\\_9.15.15.pdf](https://d155kunxf1aozz.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/ReentryHousingPlatform_Final_9.15.15.pdf)

Fall of 2020, NYCHA proposed changes to their policies related to criminal justice and requested stakeholder feedback. As a result, there may be positive changes to NYCHA policies in the coming months.

## CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Many people with complex needs being released from jail or prison need supportive services alongside their housing. Supportive housing is a solution for many of these people, however most supportive housing requires or prioritizes chronically homeless individuals. According to HUD rules, if a person was residing in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelters, or in safe havens prior to a stay of fewer than 90 days in an institution like jail or prison, that time in the institution counts towards homelessness.<sup>24</sup> However, if the stay in the institution is 90 days or longer, the entire time is counted as a break and none of the time in the institution can count towards a persons' total time of homeless. An analysis of city jails' length of stay data conducted by CSH stated that the average jail stay is 96 days, making it likely that many individuals would not qualify as "chronically homeless." This chronic homeless threshold thus makes supportive housing inaccessible to many people incarcerated in Rikers. Additionally, the NYC jail system discharge planners historically have submitted limited supportive housing applications on behalf of their clients prior to release.

## Impact of COVID-19 on Justice Impacted Populations

Prisons and jails are amplifiers of infectious diseases such as COVID-19 because social distancing is impossible inside and movement in and out of these facilities is common.<sup>25</sup> According to tracking data by the Legal Aid Society (Legal Aid), as of May 2020, over 87 of every 1,000 people incarcerated at Rikers Island, have tested positive for COVID-19, compared to just 25 residents per 1,000 citywide.<sup>26</sup> One of the ways to reduce the spread of the virus is to reduce the population of people in jails and prisons.

Legal Aid has been filing releases on behalf of people incarcerated on Rikers Island for whom, because of their age or preexisting conditions, are at higher-risk of contracting the virus. Additionally, the City has taken some action to secure

### HUD Chronic Homeless Definition

(1) A "homeless individual with a disability," as defined in the Act, who: • Lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and • Has been homeless (as described above) continuously for at least 12 months or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years where the combined occasions must total at least 12 months (Occasions separated by break of at least seven nights) Stays in institution of fewer than 90 days do not constitute a break. (2) An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition, before entering that facility; or (3) A family with an adult head of household (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraphs (1) or (2) of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/resources-for-chronic-homelessness/>

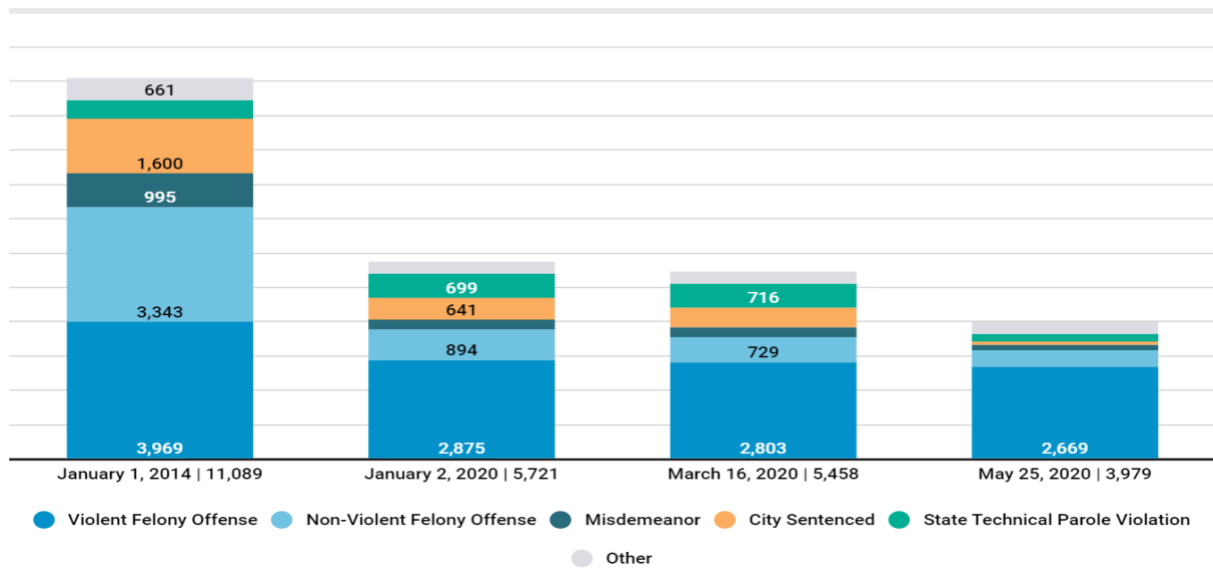
<sup>25</sup> <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/virus/virusresponse.html>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.legalaidnyc.org/covid-19-infection-tracking-in-nyc-jails/>

early release for people at Rikers who are at high-risk of death from COVID-19 due to their chronic conditions or age. For the last few years, NYC has had the lowest jail incarceration rate of all large cities.<sup>27</sup> Given the pandemic, the number of New Yorkers held in NYC jails has been reduced by nearly 30%.<sup>28</sup> However, there are now more people with Brad H status (a mental health designation) incarcerated in NYC than those without.<sup>29</sup> One reason for this has to do with the challenges of discharge planning, including finding appropriate, permanent housing for those with serious mental illness. Finally, there are still many people in the jail who were not considered for release because of their charges or placement difficulty, even though they are very much at risk of contracting COVID and dying. The Mayor’s Office still has work to do in ensuring the safety of those in Rikers.

*Image below is taken from the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice-System at a Glance Dashboard.*

People in Jail: Before and Since COVID-19 Emergency | January 1, 2014 to May 25, 2020



Efforts to maintain the health and safety of those incarcerated by releasing people into the community to a safe landing place, such as permanent housing, must be embedded as part of the discharge workflow. During the current pandemic, filling up shelters or streets with recently released individuals is not a safe move.

<sup>27</sup> <https://thecrimereport.org/2020/02/20/new-york-city-success-story-leaving-mass-imprisonment-behind/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/covid-19-impact/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://greaterjusticeny.vera.org/nycjail/>

# NYS Housing & Justice Landscape

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This section describes current efforts that NYS has taken to better integrate housing services for individuals exiting the jail system.

## New York State Council of Community Reentry and Reintegration (The Council)

In 2014, Governor Cuomo announced the formation of the Council to identify and alleviate reentry obstacles for those who are returning to their communities from incarceration. The Council<sup>30</sup> focuses on removing barriers to employment, education, and housing for justice impacted individuals.

The Council has had some accomplishments in relation to housing access and availability for formerly incarcerated individuals.

- In 2019, New York State passed legislation outlawing public and private housing from discriminating against people based on their arrest only.<sup>31</sup> This means that private and public houses cannot deny anyone housing based on an arrest where the person was not convicted.
- In 2015, the Council recommended, and the New York State Department of Housing and Community Renewal issued anti-discrimination guidance for New York-Financed Housing, including any housing built with New York State tax credits.<sup>32</sup> This guidance forbids housing discrimination based on a person's conviction alone and requires housing operators to conduct an individualized assessment to ensure adequate housing.
- Lastly, the Council increased access to housing for those returning from incarceration. Specifically, they include formerly incarcerated, homeless individuals as a target population for supportive housing by including the population within the Empire Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI).

## The New York State Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI)

Through ESSHI, the Governor committed to fund \$20 billion for the creation of 20,000 new units of supportive housing over the next 15 years. This is the first time that supportive housing operating and services money is available to providers outside NYC. The funding for the first 6,000 units was allocated in 2016 and released awards to providers through five annual RFPs of 1,200 units. This RFP is administered by the ESSHI Interagency Working Group, which is comprised of all State agencies involved in housing and services for people experiencing homelessness and co-chaired by the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH) and NYS Housing and Community Renewal (HCR) agency. All five RFPs have been issued; the last RFP for 1,200 units was recently released in the Fall of 2020. In 2021, \$250m has been allocated for FY2021/22, enough for one year of funding for about 1300 units.

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.ny.gov/criminal-justice-reform/new-york-state-council-community-re-entry-and-reintegration>

<sup>31</sup> New York State Human Rights Law section 296(16) [https://dhr.ny.gov/law#HRL296\\_16](https://dhr.ny.gov/law#HRL296_16)

<sup>32</sup> <https://hcr.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/03/doc-y-guidance-for-assessing-justice-involved-applicants.pdf>

ESSHI has a wide range of eligible populations, most notably adults or young adults reentering the community from incarceration or juvenile justice placement, particularly those with disabling conditions (i.e. behavioral health or chronic medical conditions). The benefit of ESSHI is that these populations are eligible ***regardless of meeting HUD homeless chronicity***, unlike NYC 15/15 (see below). This relief from the HUD<sup>33</sup> chronicity criteria greatly benefits those with incarceration history in that anyone institutionalized for 90-days or more no longer meets the HUD chronicity threshold.<sup>34</sup>

## NYC 15/15

In 2015, the Mayor’s Office committed to fund the creation of 15,000 new units of supportive housing over the next 15 years. A Supportive Housing Task Force was formed to recommend which populations should be eligible for this type of housing. The Task Force included chronically homeless adult singles and families,<sup>35</sup> with the head of household having severe mental illness (SMI) or a substance use disorder (SUD); chronically homeless families with children with the head of household having a SMI or SUD; young adults (18-25) at risk of homelessness or currently homeless; and young adult families (18-25) with children or pregnant women who are at risk of homelessness or currently homeless. And for the first time ever, NYC 15/15 included individuals with justice involvement as an eligible population for supportive housing. While there is still funding for these units, due to NIMBY (“not in my backyard”), developers have struggled to building this type of housing.

## Coordinated Assessment and Placement System

In January of 2017, HUD instructed all Continuums of Care (CoC)<sup>36</sup> to develop a Coordinated Entry System (CES). Every community must set up a CES to simplify the process of accessing housing and services through the local homeless response system. This single point of entry requires a standardized evaluation to ensure access to resources is fair. To meet the HUD requirement of CES, the NYC CoC developed the Coordinated Assessment and Placement System<sup>37</sup> (CAPS) to streamline and improve the assessment, prioritization, and housing matching and placement system for homeless and at-risk households within NYC’s five boroughs. The ultimate goal of CAPS is to create a more efficient, equitable, and transparent process to access housing and services while expediting exits to permanent housing, reducing waitlists, and maximizing limited resources. At this time, CAPS is able to provide access to most supportive housing programs in NYC.

One of the most critical pieces of CAPS is the Standardized Vulnerability Assessment (SVA). HUD required CoCs to develop a vulnerability for homeless and at-risk households. Since the need for supportive housing outpaces the supply, the SVA ensures that the most vulnerable and most at-risk of continued homelessness are placed into housing as quickly as possible.

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<sup>33</sup> <https://files.hudexchange.info/course-content/defining-chronically-homeless-final-rule-webinar/Defining-Chronically-Homeless-Final-Rule-Webinar-Slides-2015-01-05.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Flowchart-of-HUDs-Definition-of-Chronic-Homelessness.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> HUD Homeless Definition [https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition\\_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf](https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nyccoc/caps/caps.page>



HUD did not prescribe what a SVA must include, but allowed localities to define vulnerability. In April 2017, the CAPS Steering Committee through an extensive community process, decided on factors that would determine vulnerability. The following categories were established as domains for measuring vulnerability: 1) Multisystem use, 2) Functional Ability, and 3) History/Lived Experience. Within the Multisystem use category, the Department of Corrections (DOC) was counted as a system touch, increasing the vulnerability score for people with justice histories. Currently, CAPS does not have data from the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), but is included in future CAPS implementation.

### New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Family Reentry Program

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has urged agencies to adopt programs that enable some formerly incarcerated people to gain stability and reunite with family living in public housing. Research shows that the reentry approach strengthens families and enhances safety in communities.

The Family Reentry Program<sup>38</sup> is a collaborative effort with the Vera Institute, HUD, NYCHA, NYC, DHS, and CSH. The program is designed to reunite people leaving prison or jail with their families who live in NYCHA public housing, and to provide them with reentry services. Participants are referred to this program by providers serving justice impacted populations through an application process, which includes the family. Participants accepted into this

program are given two-year temporary permission to reside in the household while they are enrolled in the program. At the end of two years, if the participant successfully completes the requirements of the program, his/her family can request that they are added to the NYCHA household on a permanent basis. The participant's income is not included in the family's rent calculation during the program, allowing the person to get a head start on their personal income. Upon completion, the individual may officially join the family on the NYCHA household lease. Since 2013, there have been 287 applicants to the program and 161 have been accepted. The program continues to accept applicants.



There are two challenges around this program. First, the service providers that are providing reentry services are not provided any additional funding to do this increased care coordination and management work. To improve outcomes for these individuals, stronger efforts need to be made to provide additional funding for providers so they are able to provide the comprehensive services that this population needs. The second challenge is that many people are not aware of this program or its benefits. Further community education and transparency in outcomes of this program will enable increased referrals and possibly increased funding for this program.

<sup>38</sup> <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nycha/downloads/pdf/re-entry-brochure-20151109-en.pdf>

## Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

Over the last few years, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) has developed strategic plans to change the landscape of public safety. While NYC's jail population has fallen and major crime has decreased, there are more efforts to create a safer and equitable justice system in NYC. In recognizing this, NYC developed a strategic plan to address five major areas of improvement.<sup>39</sup>

### 1. *A Roadmap to Closing Rikers*

In August 2018, the de Blasio administration responded to demands from formerly incarcerated people and allies to close Rikers Island with a plan to build or reconstruct four borough-based jails throughout the city, thus enabling the closure of the ten facilities on Rikers Island and improving the conditions in existing borough jails. The plan to close Rikers is guided by three basic principles: (1) the number of people in jail can be reduced significantly, (2) our jails should be safer with modern, well designed facilities that promote the dignity of those who visit, work, and are incarcerated, and (3) the justice system should be fairer by changing the culture inside the jails, fostering community connections, and providing greater access to services.

### 2. *Reforming the Bail System*

Money bail was originally intended to allow people waiting for trial to post a bond and remain in the community. However, for far too many cases, the inability to pay bail has become the sole reason why people are in jail, and people impacted by this system have mobilized to change it. The City has made efforts to reduce the use of money bail by implementing the following solutions (1) implementing alternatives to money bail called supervised release, (2) making it easier and faster to pay bail, and (3) educating judges on alternatives to money bail.<sup>40</sup>

### 3. *Safely Reducing the Jail Population: Diversion*

Through Alternative to Detention (ATD) and Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) programs that community groups have advocated for, NYC has set targets to reduce the number of people in jail. These programs provide services to those in the community who are waiting for the conclusion of their case or in lieu of a jail sentence. Many of these ATD/ATI programs provide comprehensive case management and temporary or transitional housing placement for those who are experiencing homelessness.

### 4. *Preparing People from Jail to Return to the Community: Reentry*

In order to prevent recidivism, NYC is offering new reentry services for people leaving jail. Some of these services include peer navigation, transitional employment, and career advancement support.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/programs/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/04/23/in-new-york-s-bail-reform-backlash-a-cautionary-tale-for-other-states>

## 5. *Action Plan on Behavioral Health and the Criminal Justice System*

In December 2014, Mayor de Blasio announced his plan to focus on strategies that include reducing arrest and increasing diversion to treatment. The Mayor’s plan was influenced by ongoing community leadership, including those directly impacted, who informed the Task Force and its strategies. A few of these strategies include: street interventions, increased diversion programs, dedicated housing units, and the development of supportive housing. Programs that increased the supply of supportive housing for justice-impacted individuals were Justice Involved Supportive Housing (JISH) described below and NYC 15/15.

### Justice Involved Supportive Housing (JISH)

The Mayor’s Taskforce on Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice System made a \$130-million-dollar commitment to reducing the number of people with behavioral health needs cycling through the criminal justice system.<sup>41</sup> Through the Taskforce, JISH was developed.

JISH builds upon the Frequent Users Systems Engagement (FUSE) that CSH piloted in collaboration with NYC about 12 years ago. Similar to FUSE, the JISH cohort is created through a data match between the NYC Department of Corrections (DOC) and NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) to identify people with the highest jail and shelter use. The individuals who are identified are then directly connected to supportive housing with supportive services. The initial JISH program created 120 scattered site units managed by three service providers. Given the high demand, specifically for congregate settings for those with significant needs, JISH 2.0 was released in 2019. The goal of JISH 2.0 is to secure 150 units – 60 scattered site units and 90 congregate site units – to serve people with current justice involvement and who are homeless. In October 2019, as part of the plan to close Rikers, New York City committed to developing an additional 230 units of JISH housing. The JISH 2.0 RFP was released late 2019 and is accepting applications.

Some initial data from DOHMH and MOCJ<sup>42</sup> show some positive outcomes in their initial scattered site model. In the last quarter of FY18 (April – June 2018), almost half of those with reported substance use were engaged in substance use treatment or other supportive service, and NYC DOHMH data show that 60% of those with mental health issues were engaged in mental health services. Fewer than 5% of tenants had an emergency room visit or hospitalization that same quarter.

### District Attorney’s Office of New York County

Under the Criminal Justice Investment Initiative (CJII), District Attorney Vance developed large-scale efforts to strengthen communities, prevent crime, and accelerate reform in the justice system. These efforts aimed to invest in: (1) youth, families, and communities, (2) victims of crime, (3) 21<sup>st</sup> century crime fighting, and (4) diversion and reentry. While the diversion and reentry efforts did not include access to housing, the DA’s Office invested funding in several reentry community-based organizations, including

<sup>41</sup> <http://criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/annual-report-complete.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> Justice Involved Supportive Housing (JISH) RFP, page 7

The Osborne Association’s planning phase of its Kinship Reentry Program, which provides monetary and programmatic support to family members who are able and willing to house their loved ones who are released from prison. The first year of the pilot is being funded by Trinity Church Wall Street, and there are plans underway to support an evaluation of the pilot.

The chart below shows investments for CJII programs as of March 2019.<sup>43</sup>

FOCUS AREA 1	FOCUS AREA 2	FOCUS AREA 3
<b>Supporting Young People and Families</b>	<b>Supporting Victims of Crime</b>	<b>Diverting People from the Justice System &amp; Supporting Reentry to Communities</b>
<b>INVESTMENTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Opportunity Hubs</li> <li>Family &amp; Youth Development</li> <li>Foster Youth Transitioning to Adulthood</li> <li>Community Navigators</li> </ul>	<b>INVESTMENTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase Access to Services for Survivors of Crime</li> <li>Abusive Partner Intervention Program</li> <li>Center for Trauma Innovation</li> </ul>	<b>INVESTMENTS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>College-in-Prison Reentry Program</li> <li>Adult Project Reset</li> <li>Reentry Supports &amp; Services</li> <li>Reentry Innovation Challenge</li> <li>Social Enterprises</li> </ul>
<b>8,000 People Served</b>	<b>50 Grantees</b>	<b>\$113,501,414 Committed*</b>

\*Note: a full overview of commitments and earmarks is included in the Appendix.

## Leading Justice/Housing Advocacy and Social Service Organizations in NYC

Many of the city and state efforts that have been implemented or are underway have been led through tireless advocacy by several leading agencies in New York. While these organizations have a distinct advocacy agenda, they each call out for the need for fair, accessible, permanent housing for people impacted by the justice system. Some of these organizations are specific to advocacy and policy change, while others are developing innovative programming for those who they serve in their justice programming.

There are several organizations in NYC that are leading remarkable efforts to change the landscape of justice and housing. Specifically, the organizations listed below are fighting to change policy, make systems more equitable, and recognize that access to safe and permanent housing is right for those individuals with justice involvement.

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.manhattanda.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Criminal-Justice-Investment-Initiative-status-report-March-2019.pdf>

## Leading Advocacy and Social Service Organizations

Organization & Mission	Active Campaign / Housing Highlight
<p><b>Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES)<sup>44</sup></b></p> <p><i>The mission of CASES is to increase public safety through innovative services that reduce crime and incarceration, improve behavioral health, promote recovery and rehabilitation, and create opportunities for success in the community. CASES offers many programs, from reentry, to alternative to incarceration/diversion, to mental health. All of their services are trauma-informed, with a focus on helping clients obtain behavioral health treatment, employment services, housing services, and more.</i></p>	<p>Initially convened by CASES in 2008 to oversee implementation of mental health diversion in NY County Criminal Court, the Behavioral Health Diversion Forum’s (BHDF) activities have expanded to include addressing justice-involved persons with all behavioral health needs, diversion also in Supreme Court, and relevant Medicaid reforms enacted in NY State as well as in the Affordable Care Act. Along with the Forum’s scope of activities, BHDF membership has also expanded to now include more than 75 key staff representing more than 30 government agencies, criminal justice stakeholders, consumer and advocacy groups, and treatment and service providers. <b>This approach is designed to improve access to services (including housing), reduce detention and incarceration, and improve outcomes for justice-involved persons with behavioral health needs.</b></p>
<p><b>Center for Community Alternatives (CCA)<sup>45</sup></b></p> <p><i>CCA is a leader in community-based alternatives to incarceration and policy advocacy to reduce reliance on incarceration. CCA offers services to communities in New York City, Syracuse, and Rochester, engaging approximately 2,500 youth and adults annually who would otherwise be incarcerated.</i></p>	<p><b>Freedom Commons Academy is an alternative to traditional shelters.</b> It is a reentry program with housing, specifically for individuals who are homeless upon leaving incarceration and who are committed to engage in a program with wraparound services to help build a foundation as they transition to permanent housing in the community. The Academy, which is part of the larger Freedom Commons apartment building, is an 11-bed, congregate living program for men and women. Additionally, Freedom Commons has 11 apartments that are permanent supportive housing and 43 other apartment/townhouses that are affordable units. CCA and Syracuse Housing Authority (SHA) are co-owners, under Freedom Commons LLC, with CCA providing on site case management and linkages to other CCA and community programs, and SHA providing property management.</p>
<p><b>Community Service Society (CSS)<sup>46</sup></b></p> <p><i>CSS works to counter the disproportionate effect the criminal justice system has on low income New Yorkers and communities of color by raising awareness, developing policy and legislative proposals, building alliances between community groups, providing impactful direct services and legal representation, and advocating on behalf of individuals with conviction histories at city and state levels of government.</i></p>	<p>CSS works with tenant leaders, fellow advocates, and policy makers at all levels of government to address the scarcity of affordable housing for low-income New Yorkers and the hardships they face as a result of rising rents and displacement pressures. <b>Three main housing goals for CSS are (1) preserving existing affordable housing, (2) strengthening rent regulation, and (3) expanding opportunities for public housing residents.</b></p>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.cases.org/>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.communityalternatives.org/about/>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.cssny.org/>

Organization & Mission	Active Campaign / Housing Highlight
<p><b>Enterprise Community Partners</b></p> <p><i>Enterprise is a national nonprofit that brings together partnership, policy leadership, and investment to multiply the impact of affordable housing development. In New York, Enterprise has a “Vulnerable Populations” program that focuses on the housing stability of vulnerable populations and develops innovative housing-based models to advance economic opportunity as a housing stability and homeless prevention strategy.<sup>47</sup></i></p>	<p>One of the initiatives from the program is <b>Justice-Involved Housing</b>. Through a partnership between Enterprise, Vera Institute of Justice, the Fortune Society, Fair Housing Justice Center, and Local Initiatives Corporation (LISC), they are developing a justice-involved housing platform to (1) educate affordable housing developers and landlords about the needs of formerly incarcerated people, and (2) identify sustainable housing models for successful reentry after incarceration.</p>
<p><b>NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Health Justice Network (DOHMH HJN)</b></p> <p><i>DOHMH’s New York City Health Justice Network (HJN) works with persons coming home from jail or prison to help make reentry as positive as possible. The HJN pairs participants with a community health worker (CHW) with lived experience of the criminal legal system, who provides peer support, mentoring, and connection to health and social services. HJN participants are adults residing in NYC who have come home in the last three years. All HJN services are voluntary. This program is implemented by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and funded by the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office.</i></p>	<p>CHWs actively work with participants to ensure stability in the community with access to housing being key. CHWs work with a variety of housing programs, including supportive housing, to obtain placement for their clients.</p> <p>There are six HJN grant partner sites in which CHWs are embedded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three Federally Qualified Healthcare Centers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Institute for Family Health</li> <li>○ Community Healthcare Network</li> <li>○ Sydenham Health Care Center, Gotham Health, NYC Health + Hospitals</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Three Community- Based Social Service Providers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fortune Society</li> <li>○ Osborne Association</li> <li>○ Center for Court Innovation’s Harlem Community Justice Center</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/where-we-work/new-york/programs>

Organization & Mission	Active Campaign / Housing Highlight
<p><b>Fortune Society</b></p> <p><i>The Fortune Society’s mission is to support successful reentry from incarceration and promote alternatives to incarceration, thus strengthening the fabric of communities. The Fortune Society does this by (1) believing in the power of individuals to change, (2) building lives through service programs shaped by the needs and experience on participants, and (3) changing minds through education and advocacy to promote the creation of a fair, humane, and truly rehabilitative correction system. Fortune has provided a broad array of wraparound supportive services to justice-impacted individuals since its founding in 1967.</i></p>	<p>The Fortune Society has been a leader since 2002 in development and provision of <b>housing for people who are homeless and justice-impacted</b>. The Fortune Society provides a nationally recognized continuum from emergency to transitional and permanent supportive housing at two West Harlem congregate sites, The Fortune Academy (“the Castle”) and Castle Gardens. In 2020, to meet the need to obtain the release of vulnerable people with behavioral health issues from incarceration that escalated in urgency with the advent of COVID, Fortune opened Freedom House, an emergency and transitional residence in East Harlem. An additional permanent supportive residence for seniors will be opening in the Bronx in the summer of 2021 as a joint venture with private developer Bronx Pro, with another in development in East Harlem with an opening target of 2024. At the request of NYS DCJS to meet the need for such housing in upstate New York, Fortune has provided the technical assistance to the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) to replicate its congregate housing model in Syracuse. That replication, involving partnership between CCA and the Syracuse Housing Authority, is described elsewhere in this publication. Fortune is currently in discussion about other housing model replication opportunities elsewhere in the US.</p> <p>In addition to its congregate facilities, Fortune operates over 200 permanent supportive scattered site apartments. One of the scattered site programs that Fortune operates are <b>60 units of Justice-Involved Supportive Housing (JISH)</b>. Fortune is a leader or active participant of the following campaigns and programs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Fair Chance for Housing Campaign</b></li> <li>2. <b>Health Justice Network</b></li> <li>3. <b>JISH, supportive housing for justice-impacted individuals</b></li> </ol>

Organization & Mission	Active Campaign / Housing Highlight
<p><b>John Jay College Institute for Justice and Opportunity (Institute)</b></p> <p><i>The Institute (formerly known as the Prison Reentry Institute) works to eliminate barriers for those involved in the criminal justice system. The Institute focuses on increasing access to higher education and career pathways for people with conviction histories, while advancing policy change to eliminate criminal background check barriers to housing, education, and employment.</i></p>	<p>Over the last few years, the Institute has initiated a <b>Fair Chance for Housing Campaign</b><sup>48</sup> to eliminate background checks for people who are exiting the criminal justice system. People who are being released are often denied housing due to their conviction record, leaving them with little to no options in obtaining permanent housing.</p>
<p><b>JustLeadershipUSA (JLUSA)</b><sup>49</sup></p> <p><i>JLUSA was founded in 2014 with the main goal of cutting the US correction population in half by 2030. JLUSA has been instrumental in NYC with elevating the leadership of formerly incarcerated people to advance leading campaigns to close Rikers and address the needs of those being released to one of the City’s boroughs.</i></p> <p><i>In April 2016, JustLeadershipUSA launched the #CLOSErikers campaign to demand the closure of Rikers Island. In the span of the year, organizers were able to influence the Mayor to state his commitment to close Rikers Island, and to move the City pass plan for closing Rikers in October 2019.</i></p>	<p>Community reinvestment has always been an essential part of the #CLOSErikers vision, and in 2018 JustLeadershipUSA, along with over 60 partners, developed the <b>#buildCOMMUNITIES</b><sup>50</sup> platform, which offers a roadmap for NYC to use its divestments from law enforcement to invest in communities that have been most harmed by mass criminalization.</p> <p>The platform focuses on 7 main areas of reform: (1) public health, (2) <b>housing</b>, (3) employment and economic development, (4) education and schools, (5) community programs and services, (6) conflict transformation and alternative accountability, and (7) structure of investments.</p>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.fairchancehousing.org/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://jlusa.org/>

<sup>50</sup> <https://jlusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/buildCOMMUNITIES-platform.pdf>



Organization & Mission	Active Campaign / Housing Highlight
<p><b>Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice</b><sup>51</sup></p> <p><i>Katal is a community-based organization that works to strengthen the people, policies, institutions, and movements that advance health, equity, and justice through community organizing. Their work is focused on three interrelated goals: (1) advancing evidence-based solutions to achieve more equitable communities, (2) building leadership and organizing capacity of neighborhoods, and (3) ending mass criminalization, mass incarceration, and the war on drugs.</i></p> <p><i>Outside of their campaign work, Katal leads monthly New York State Criminal Justice Reform Calls. The goals of these calls are to: (1) share and highlight issues, campaigns, and projects that groups are working on to advance statewide reform; (2) identify ways to align, coordinate, and support each other in the work to end mass incarceration; and (3) strengthen organizing and advocacy across issues and build a movement in New York. These calls are open to anyone engaged in criminal justice reform efforts throughout the state.</i></p>	<p>Across New York, the organization is actively engaged in a parole reform campaign called <b>#LessIsMoreNY</b>.<sup>52</sup> There are approximately 35,000 people under active parole supervision in New York State who at almost any time can see their efforts to successfully rejoin the workforce and reintegrate into their families and their communities disrupted by reincarceration for a technical violation. #LessIsMoreNY seeks to keep people out of incarceration and in their communities by transforming parole in New York.</p>
<p><b>Legal Action Center (LAC)</b><sup>53</sup></p> <p><i>The Legal Action Center (LAC) uses legal and policy strategies to fight discrimination, build health equity, and restore opportunity for people with criminal records, substance use disorders, and HIV or AIDS.</i></p>	<p>The Legal Action Center provides free legal services to people in New York who have been <b>unfairly denied access to housing</b> as a result of their conviction history or health status. They work to promote fair housing policies at the local, state, and federal levels through their policy advocacy.</p> <p>LAC has partnered with John Jay College’s from Punishment to Public Health (P2PH) and co-organizes the <b>NYC Health &amp; Justice Working Group</b> that is focused on accelerating innovation across sectors. Members include managed care, Health Home, care management and direct service providers, as well as local and state government stakeholders. The Working Group aims to accelerate coordination between these agencies while addressing persistent structural barriers and policy concerns.</p> <p>LAC and P2PH also organize issue-focused panel events to introduce key findings, as well as the successes of the working group and its members, to a broader audience of public health and criminal justice partners in New York City and surrounding regions.</p>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.katalcenter.org/>

<sup>52</sup> [#LessIsMoreNY](https://www.katalcenter.org/#LessIsMoreNY)

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.lac.org/>

Organization & Mission	Active Campaign / Housing Highlight
<p><b>Osborne Association</b><sup>54</sup></p> <p><i>The Osborne Association works in partnership with individuals, families, and communities to create opportunities for people affected by the criminal justice system to further develop their strengths and lead lives of responsibility and contribution. They design, implement, and advocate for solutions that prevent and reduce the damage caused by crime and incarceration.</i></p> <p><i>Osborne offers a wide range of direct services to justice system-involved people, as well as their children and families. Their programs and services are evidence- and experience-based and designed to:</i></p> <p><i>(1) reduce crime and reliance on incarceration, (2) heal the damage and trauma of crime and incarceration, and (3) enhance opportunity for those affected by crime and incarceration.</i></p>	<p>Currently, the Osborne Association is re-developing a former prison in the Bronx into a community reentry center offering transitional housing for people coming home from prison and jail. Additionally, Osborne is partnering on the <b>development of permanent supportive housing units</b> targeting the previously incarcerated and a member of the <b>Fair Chance for Housing Campaign</b> fighting against housing discrimination for those with conviction histories.</p>
<p><b>Trinity Church Wall Street</b><sup>55</sup></p> <p><i>Trinity Church Wall Street is a growing and inclusive Episcopal parish that seeks to serve and heal the world by building neighborhoods that live Gospel truths, generations of faithful leaders, and sustainability communities. Trinity Church Wall Street is committed to protecting the vulnerable and striving for justice in our country.</i></p>	<p><b>Faith Communities for Just Reentry</b><sup>56</sup> campaign launched in the summer of 2020. The policy platform includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide safety for incarcerated individuals released during COVID-19</li> <li>2. <b>Unlock housing supply for justice-involved individuals and their families by (1) ending NYCHA permanent exclusions; (2) institutionalize NYCHA Family Reunification Program; (3) reform chronicity criteria, (4) increase the supply and value of housing vouchers plus combat landlord discrimination; and (5) leverage city/state funds to create new justice-involved supportive, transitional, and affordable housing</b></li> <li>3. Develop a coordinated reentry system accountable to the well-being of each person</li> </ol>

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.osborneny.org/about/>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.trinitywallstreet.org/social-justice/our-work>

<sup>56</sup> [https://www.trinitywallstreet.org/sites/default/files/faith\\_communities\\_for\\_just\\_reentry\\_-\\_policy\\_platform\\_2020-09\\_1.pdf](https://www.trinitywallstreet.org/sites/default/files/faith_communities_for_just_reentry_-_policy_platform_2020-09_1.pdf)

Organization & Mission	Active Campaign / Housing Highlight
<p><b>Urban Justice Center</b><sup>57</sup></p> <p><i>The Urban Justice Center provides a platform for dynamic advocates to fuel social change, leading the way for a just, fair, and decent society.</i></p>	<p><b>The Freedom Agenda</b> is a member-led project housed at Urban Justice Center, dedicated to organizing people and communities directly impacted by incarceration to achieve decarceration and system transformation. To build power and affect change, they engage formerly incarcerated people and their loved ones as members and leaders who drive campaigns that utilize a range of tactics including direct action, public education, narrative change, and issue-based lobbying.</p> <p>The Freedom Agenda advocates to decarcerate New York City, to defend the human rights of incarcerated people, to <b>divest from systems of punishment, and to redistribute those resources to the people and communities</b> that have been most harmed by mass criminalization and systemic racism. The project was founded in October 2020 by staff and members who played leadership roles in the #CLOSErikers and #buildCOMMUNITIES campaigns while at JLUSA.</p> <p>The Urban Justice Center's Mental Health Project's (MHP) mission is to disrupt and dismantle the cycle of hospitalization, homelessness, and incarceration that traps too many low-income people with mental health concerns in our New York City community. They work to disrupt and dismantle this cycle by: <b>securing financial and medical benefits to prevent homelessness and hospitalization</b>; providing peer advocacy and educational workshops on reentry and systems advocacy; ensuring proper discharge planning prior to a community member's release from jail; providing social work support; <b>offering limited housing assistance</b>; and working in coalitions to advocate for policy change.</p> <p>Urban Justice Center's Safety Net Project (SNP) includes a robust eviction defense practice under the <b>City's Right to Counsel initiative</b>, and also support and advocacy services for homeless New Yorkers. SNP's homelessness organizing is led by the Safety Net Activists, a group of activists who have been directly impacted by homelessness. SNP is a leader in the <b>Homeless Can't Stay Home coalition</b>, a member of the <b>Stop the Sweeps campaign</b>, and also participates in the <b>Housing Justice for All Coalition's Homelessness Working Group</b>, which currently works to ensure access to affordable housing for homeless New Yorkers.</p>

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.urbanjustice.org/>

Organization & Mission	Active Campaign / Housing Highlight
<p><b>Women’s Community Justice Association (WCJA)</b><sup>58</sup></p> <p><i>WCJA’s mission is to actively engage in criminal (in)justice reform aimed at reducing the number of incarcerations of women in New York, and furthering the long-term stability of vulnerable female populations currently or historically involved in the criminal (in)justice system.</i></p>	<p><b>#BEYONDrosies2020</b> is a campaign under WCJA. The campaign is dedicated to decarcerating the female jail population in New York City and closing the Rose M. Singer Center, the all-female jail on Rikers Island, as soon as possible. #BEYONDrosies2020 advocates for the expansion of ATI and ATD programming as well as investments in community interventions such as <b>affordable housing</b>, mental health supports, and harm reduction services.</p>
<p><b>Women’s Community Justice Project (WCJP)</b><sup>59</sup></p> <p><i>WCJP is a collaborative partnership between HousingPlus, Greenhope Services for Women, Hour Children, and Providence House. HousingPlus provides two functions for WCJP: serving as lead administrator of the program and operating a portion of the WCJP transitional housing units. WCJP currently operates 59 units of transitional housing for women as a diversion from the Rose M. Singer Center of Rikers Island at four sites across Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. Ten of the 59 units are specifically for families, as WCJP recognizes the importance of family reunification for women with justice involvement.</i></p>	<p>Utilizing approaches in <b>housing first</b>, harm reduction, and trauma-informed care, WCJP focuses on keeping women in the community, and firmly believes that supportive services are far more effective than punitive measures for the women and families participating in WCJP. Since 2017, WCJP has served 235 women, the majority of whom have satisfactorily resolved their court cases, enrolled in mental health services, addiction counseling, educational programs, or found employment. <b>Additionally, many of these women moved back with their families or found new housing.</b></p>

<sup>58</sup> <https://womenscja.org/>

<sup>59</sup> <http://housingplusnyc.org/the-womens-community-justice-project/>

## Opportunities and Gaps within Housing and Justice

New York is leading the country when it comes to NYC and state government committing to long term supportive housing development and coordinating funding cycles to support its operations and services. However, what is ahead is even more complicated. After reviewing NY's current housing and justice landscape, these are a few key opportunities:

- New York is at the stage in which the focus cannot be just about more housing funding, but instead a better understanding as to what is available and how to coordinate across systems and agencies to leverage and maximize what is already in place, such as utilizing CAPS to access supportive housing or using NYC 15/15 and ESSHI resources.
- There are opportunities for justice and housing organizations to have common language in their City Council and Albany asks. Often justice organizations will mention housing as a broad ask, and this can and should evolve into advocating for very specific types of housing. This should include advocating for Housing First models, such as permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing, depending on their population focus.
- By better understanding the resources and funding in the community, justice, housing and advocacy organizations can collaborate to work with communities on "Not In My Backyard" (NIMBY) issues to ensure supportive housing is built and units are prioritized for people leaving jail and prison.
- For programs that have shown some success, like the NYCHA Family Reentry Program, the city still needs to fully invest and provide additional funding to support this intensive work.

## What Now? Recommendations for NYC

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Through the development of this 2020 New York Housing and Justice System Change Platform, distinct opportunities were identified to advance the connection and development of housing for people who are impacted by the justice system. Many advocacy organizations and programs are working to solve the challenge of housing for justice-impacted populations, however, many of these organizations and programs are not integrated with existing NYC systems and programming to enable connections to permanent housing. There is also opportunity for justice and housing organizations to share common language in their City Council and Albany asks, as well as their justice-related housing requests to become more specific and nuanced to advance policy discussions that will ensure a Housing First approach. The closing of Rikers and shrinking of our jail system allows the City to invest in other priority areas, like JustLeadershipUSA's [#buildCOMMUNITIES Platform](#), and Urban Justice's Freedom Agenda, as well as investment in supportive housing.

CSH sees several opportunities to advance housing and equity for this population.

## Bridge the Gap between Justice & Housing Advocacy Groups and City Agencies

During COVID, hotels in NYC are being used to expand shelter capacity – which includes people being released from Rikers jail. The de Blasio administration has been working on developing triage, intervention, management, and discharge plans for people in the hotels, however, minimal plans have been released around ensuring that those who are leaving hotels are able to access permanent housing. The pipeline for justice impacted housing must be prioritized and expanded to help permanently place people leaving these and other emergency units/shelters.

To accomplish this, NYC must de-silo across agencies by creating data-sharing opportunities and developing effective workflows between the health, justice, and housing sectors. This will need to include connecting advocacy efforts that are elevating critical community needs to the city agencies' responsible for justice and housing policies. Some opportunities are:

- ✓ Establish data sharing between DOC and other justice organizations and the Human Resource Administration (HRA) to prioritize individuals with a justice history in CAPS.
- ✓ Provide training and education on supportive housing development and management for justice, reentry, and poverty services organizations new to supportive housing.
- ✓ Engage with city programs, like the NYCHA Family Reentry Program and Justice Involved Supportive Housing (JISH), to strengthen and expand access to the program.
- ✓ Collaborate with justice/housing advocacy leaders on shared vision and goals for the next 2021 Mayoral Campaign and City Council platforms.

## Prioritize Supportive Housing for the Justice Impacted

As NYC moves forward with closing Rikers, it is crucial to make an up-front investment in supportive housing as it will save the city money over time by reducing jail stays, shelter days, and emergency medical interventions. NYC should match spending on building jails with investments in communities and/or right-size jail staffing and use those fiscal savings to invest in supportive housing. This will need to include stronger, more coordinated advocacy and systems change work to ultimately bring together partners to address the existing shortfalls and encourage investment to help justice-impacted people and communities thrive. Some opportunities for prioritizing supportive housing are to:

- ✓ Conduct a needs assessment to understand current supportive housing options for justice impacted people and how many units (and unit types) are needed, in addition to establishing a financial model for any future development.
- ✓ Work with justice agencies who provide transitional housing to leverage development resources, like NYC 15/15 and ESSHI, to develop permanent supportive housing.
- ✓ Ensure that justice and advocacy organizations are plugged into CAPS to determine eligibility and a path into supportive housing.

## Advance Equity through Program Expansion, Policy Changes, and Overall Strategy

Advancing equity through program expansion, policy changes, and overall strategy is essential and will require understanding what communities are currently being served and where there are gaps and barriers. CSH's Racial Disparity and Disproportionality Index (RDDI) tool, which looks at 17 unique public systems and measures and allows for the examination of systematic differences in representation between groups and geographic measures, shows significant overrepresentation of BIPOC communities within the homeless, prison and jail systems in New York, particularly for Black communities. New resources alone cannot address these systemic inequities; there must also be work to ensure that resources are equitably distributed. To accomplish this, racial and other forms of structural discrimination need to be dismantled to allow housing and service access for impacted people and communities. NYC can do this by:

- ✓ Leveraging CSH's RDDI tool and additional NYC specific information to develop an advocacy platform to inform city government and community on existing racial disparities, race/ethnicity gaps in data collection, and recommendations to reduce racial disparities.
- ✓ Working directly with BIPOC individuals with justice histories to inform this important work.

## Conclusion

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During this historic moment when policy makers will be forced to shift funding and resources in response to COVID-19, it is essential that there be a concentrated effort to make sure these changes advance equity and provide housing – a proven solution to increasing public health and safety – for people leaving Rikers and other City jails. The more people enter the NYC shelter system, the less health stability there will be in our communities. There is significant opportunity to channel the growing public demands to reinvest public safety funding into the community, including housing for people who are justice impacted. Advocacy coalitions have been raising these community voices and there needs to be a clear campaign to coordinate directly with the city agencies who oversee justice and housing policies. There are current resources that can be leveraged to develop more affordable housing, and specifically supportive housing, in the new year. This paper also highlights several city programs that are proving to be successful, and those need to be evaluated and fully funded. We need to continue to advance and improve this work. As the effort to #CLOSERikers continues, the city needs to implement concrete and financially feasible programming for those returning to their communities. Additionally, any program, policy or funding change should advance racial equity. These policy and funding changes must be elevated into the 2021 Mayor and City Council election platforms to continue momentum for the creation of housing for people who are justice impacted.

## Acknowledgements

CSH acknowledges all of the organizations listed in the paper. Their commitment is critical and commendable. Together, our goal is to ensure that all New Yorkers exiting and within the criminal justice system have access to the quality services needed to live in their communities with housing being a determinant of their success.

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