

reentry homeless | facts

According to the 2011 Homeless Count Report, 28% of Indianapolis adults (368 people) who are experiencing homelessness and living in emergency shelters or on the streets acknowledged having a prior felony conviction.

Besides having criminal histories – often a barrier to finding a job or housing – many people released from incarceration face additional challenges, including serious mental health problems and addiction issues.

Housing problems, including homelessness, are common among individuals leaving the corrections system. They tend to have limited or low incomes, and, often due to their criminal history, lack the ability to obtain housing through the channels that are open to other low-income people. As a result, one in five people who leave prison become homeless soon thereafter, if not immediately.

According to the Urban Institute, (www.urban.org), securing housing is perhaps the most immediate challenge facing prisoners upon their release. While many returning prisoners have plans to stay with family, those who do not have this option are confronted with limited housing options and a host of factors that can complicate the process, such as:



the scarcity of affordable and available housing, legal barriers and regulations, prejudices that restrict tenancy for this population, and strict eligibility requirements for federally subsidized housing.

Preliminary studies indicate that those who leave prison and become homeless are substantially more likely to return to prison than those with stable housing.

The [Urban Institute's 2010 *Returning Home*](#) study reported the following findings relating to re-entry and housing:

- The majority of prisoners believe that having a stable place to live is important to successful reentry. Those with no housing arrangements believe that they will need help finding a place to live after release.
- The majority of returning prisoners live with family members and/or intimate partners upon release.
- Many former prisoners return home to living arrangements that are only temporary.
- Housing options for returning prisoners who do not stay with family members or friends are extremely limited.
- Fully 80% of ex-offenders have a substance abuse problem

Yet, there are few evidence-based reentry housing programs that target returning prisoners with mental illness, demonstrating a critical programmatic need.

Additional programs are needed to help people with criminal backgrounds successfully reintegrate into society, both for their own good and to help avoid the high public cost of providing emergency services when they become homeless – or of housing them again in prisons and jails when they commit new offenses.

Locally, programs in Indianapolis such as Craine House, focusing on women coming out of corrections, and PACE OAR, with an array of services for re-entry people, are working to assist with these important issues.

What Works

Supportive housing, both permanent and transitional with services focused specifically on issues relating to re-entry and re-integration is one of the most important housing options available to keep former prisoners in housing and off the streets. Often set up with some aspect of the criminal justice system as a partner, these types of housing options can be helpful.

Support services targeted at families of returning prisoners are also important. The first option for many people upon re-entry is to return to extended family. However, this can often upset what, in many cases, are households already living with high housing cost burdens and other ancillary issues. Support services and subsidies targeted at stabilizing the family and the housing situation can be an effective preventative measure to homelessness.

What you can do

- Ask local officials to focus efforts on easing the transition out of correctional facilities and back into society, particularly funding for permanent or transitional supportive housing aimed at the needs of those re-integrating. Also strengthen programs designed to provide housing-related supports to families accepting re-entry members back into their homes.

Contact CHIP at (317) 630-0853 to find out more about how you can help.



Transition in place

“Transition in place” refers to a housing model where a person moves into permanent housing and support services are provided, and slowly the services are removed, or “transitioned”, as the person in the housing begins to achieve self-sufficiency. This is the type of program housing model that tends to work well with a re-entry population.