



Rural Reentry: Housing Options and Obstacles for Ex-Offenders

Housing Assistance Council
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FOR EX-OFFENDERS**

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HAC, founded in 1971, is a nonprofit corporation that supports the development of rural low-income housing nationwide. HAC provides technical housing services, loans from a revolving fund, housing program and policy analysis, research and demonstration projects, and training and information services. HAC is an equal opportunity lender.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The United States incarcerates more people than any other country in the world and, in 2007, the national prison population surpassed 1.5 million individuals (PEW, 2008). The massive explosion of the nation's prison population has largely occurred in the past 20 years, tripling from the 585,084 individuals incarcerated in 1987. As of 2009, 1 in 31 Americans is in prison, jail, or otherwise under the supervision of probation or parole (PEW, 2009). As incarceration rates continue to increase exponentially, the number of ex-offenders who return home looking to reintegrate themselves into society continues to rise as well. As 95 percent of incarcerated persons will eventually be released, the community challenges of managing the needs of ex-offenders are becoming overwhelming (CRJ, 2001).

Much of the research and policy on the reintegration of formerly incarcerated persons discusses the issue through an urban perspective where large numbers of ex-offenders are densely concentrated and there is a critical mass of formerly incarcerated persons in need that can sustain various creative, high density housing options. The dynamics of a rural environment, however, pose different challenges and opportunities for the ex-offenders and reentry housing practitioners. Growing numbers of formerly incarcerated persons are returning home to rural communities that may lack the resources or tools to adequately meet demand. Rural reentry service networks may be loosely formed, incomplete or nonexistent depending on the region. This report serves as a probe into the burgeoning, complex topic of rural reentry, attempting to better understand the rural environment, its housing providers, and the ex-offenders who call it home.

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

The Housing Assistance Council has conducted a review and examination of prisoner reentry in the rural context, focusing specifically on accessing and maintaining affordable housing. In addition to the analysis of rural reentry, this report details the regulations associated with housing formerly incarcerated persons, provides resources available for rural communities managing these issues and supplies recommendations for practitioners and stakeholders.

Federally subsidized housing is a small but important component of the affordable housing stock in rural communities. The report presents several subsidized housing programs and reviews their guidelines and policies relevant to persons with criminal backgrounds. Housing programs explored include HUD Public Housing, Project Based Rental Assistance, Housing Choice Vouchers, Low Income Housing Tax Credit properties, Section 202-811 rental housing, Rural Homeless resources and the USDA rural rental housing programs, Section 515 and Section 538. While government subsidized units are important sources of housing, privately owned homes available for rent make up the overwhelming majority of the affordable rental stock in rural areas. This report investigates the obstacles and opportunities in accessing quality housing in the private market for formerly incarcerated persons.

The report also includes several case studies which highlight local affordable housing efforts that are specifically targeted to formerly incarcerated persons returning to rural communities. Data collection for the case studies utilized both primary and secondary sources. Interviews were also conducted in addition to the qualitative research.

WHAT IS REENTRY?

Every year, over 650,000 individuals exit the criminal justice system and return to urban and rural communities facing a road toward reentering society oftentimes paved with more obstacles than opportunities. The service needs of ex-offenders are highest immediately following release, as many ex-offenders need a combination of food stamps, drug treatment, mental health treatment, housing, and referrals to community-based programs and clinics (Black and Cho, 2004). An overwhelming proportion of ex-offenders have not completed high school, have histories of substance abuse and health problems, and have limited employable skills (Black and Cho, 2004). Furthermore, ex-offenders tend not to have valid photo identification, are equipped with only a small amount of money, and have not begun the application process for Medicaid or other financial support systems upon release (Black and Cho, 2004). With a quicksand foundation, many ex-offenders struggle just to satisfy their immediate and extended needs, let alone begin to rebuild their lives.

Reentry initiatives develop programs and coordinated support systems that encourage the successful reintegration of offenders back to their communities. Reentry programming, which often involves a comprehensive case management approach, is intended to assist offenders in acquiring the life skills needed to succeed in the community and become law-abiding citizens (DOJ, 2008). A number of programs are utilized in assisting ex-offenders in the reentry process including prerelease programs, drug rehabilitation and vocational training, and employment programs.

In recent years, a new approach to prisoner reintegration has emerged in the form of reentry courts. As of 2005, 12 reentry courts exist in 10 states across the country. The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) within the Department of Justice (DOJ) has led the movement for reentry courts. According to the Council of State Governments, reentry courts establish a seamless system of offender accountability and support services throughout the reentry process by establishing a program of graduated sanctions and rewards that can be used to influence parolee conduct without automatically resorting to incarceration, the most expensive and extreme sanction.

II. UNDERSTANDING THE RURAL REENTRY LANDSCAPE

Much of the research and policy on ex-offender reintegration is directed toward reentry efforts in urban communities, a focus that may result in solutions or models not necessarily transferrable to rural communities. Rural towns and neighborhoods have different dynamics— though spanning vast distances, rural communities tend to be more intimate spaces that rely on individuals to solve problems. Government assistance and federal programs are sometimes spurned in favor of solving problems informally (Wodahl, 2006), an outlook that can make securing housing and taking the necessary steps to integrate into society all the more difficult for an ex-offender.

Housing challenges for ex-offenders are often compounded by multiple housing problems in the rural housing market. The thin supply of rental and transitional housing units continue to be compromised and suppressed by quality and affordability constraints. According to 2007 American Housing Survey (AHS) indicators of housing adequacy, 1.5 million or 5.5 percent of rural homes (homes located outside of metropolitan statistical areas) are either moderately or severely substandard, which is a higher rate than for metropolitan statistical areas (which include both central cities and suburbs).

In most cases, rental or supportive housing is the most viable housing option for persons returning from jail or prison. However, there is an absolute dearth of quality, and affordable rental housing in many rural communities. In a nation that places a high value on homeownership and has committed substantial resources to increasing ownership opportunities, the needs of renters are often overlooked. There are substantially fewer rental units in rural areas compared to metropolitan or urban locales. The composition of rural rental housing also differs from urban areas. Rural renters are more likely to live in single-family homes or in small multifamily structures. Nearly 40 percent of the rental housing stock in rural areas consists of single-family homes – twice the rate of metropolitan areas (HAC, 2008). Manufactured housing is also much more prevalent in rural areas than urban locales, where over 15 percent of rural renters live in manufactured homes. Rural renters also live in older housing than owners; 34 percent of rural renter-occupied units were built before 1960 (HAC, 2008).

Rural rental households experience some of the most significant housing problems in the United States. Renter households in rural areas are twice as likely to live in substandard housing as their owner counterparts (HAC, 2008). Although housing costs are generally lower in rural areas than in cities, many rural households, particularly renters, find it difficult to meet these expenses. Approximately 36 percent of rural renter households pay more than 30 percent of their monthly income for housing costs and are considered cost-burdened, compared to 20 percent for owners (HAC, 2008).

Minorities in rural areas are among the poorest and worst housed groups in the entire nation, with extremely high levels of inadequate housing conditions. Non-white and Hispanic rural households are three times more likely to live in substandard housing than white rural residents. Minorities are also more likely to live in inadequate housing in rural areas than in metro areas. Rural African

Americans have particularly high substandard housing rates as approximately one in five rural African American headed-households lives in substandard housing.

Additionally, crowding has increased in rural America over the past 20 years (HAC, 2002). It is estimated that nearly 400,000 rural households are considered crowded, as they have more than one person per room in the home. Household crowding is particularly a problem among rural Hispanic households. Overall, Hispanics occupy over one-quarter of all crowded housing units in rural areas while comprising just 5 percent of all occupied units. In addition, many rural Americans live in substandard or crowded homes and about one-quarter of rural households are considered “cost-burdened. (HAC, 2002). Many rural households almost always experience cost burden in combination with either substandard or crowding conditions and renters comprise over half of the rural households who contend with cost, quality or crowding issues (HAC, 2002).

In addition to housing strains, rural individuals and families experience both literal homelessness and extremely precarious housing situations (Post, 2002). Literal homelessness, the condition of living on the street or in a shelter, is often episodic and may be less common in rural areas than in cities due to kinship networks and the lack of service providers and resources. Homeless people in rural areas typically experience precarious housing conditions, moving from one extremely substandard, overcrowded, and/or cost-burdened housing situation to another, often doubling or tripling up with friends or relatives (Stover, 1999). While housed in these unstable situations, rural homeless people do not meet the definition of literal homelessness used to determine eligibility for government programs.

Homelessness occurs in both rural and urban communities due to a multitude of structural and individual factors including poverty, a shortage of affordable housing, inadequate mental health and substance abuse services, and domestic violence. Rural homelessness, however, differs in important ways from urban homelessness (Post, 2002).

- Rural homeless persons tend to be less educated but are more likely to be employed, although in temporary jobs.
- The rural homeless are less likely to receive government assistance but more likely to have higher average monthly incomes and more likely to receive cash assistance from friends.
- Rural homeless persons experience shorter episodes of homelessness, and are two to four times more likely to live with friends or family.
- Rural homeless persons are as likely as other homeless persons to report having a mental health, alcohol, or drug problem during the past month, but six times more likely than their urban counterparts to report an alcohol-only problem during the last year.
- Rural homeless persons are less likely to have health insurance or access to medical care.

Moreover, individuals recently released from incarceration encounter common challenges irrespective of the community to which they return. However, certain peripheral elements

important to the reentry process such as transportation, employment, and health care differ for rural residents from their urban counterparts.

Rural areas often have fewer employment opportunities than urban markets due to a decline in traditional rural industries such as mining, timber and manufacturing. Today there are many more service based jobs and rural workers are much more likely to be “underemployed” than in past decades. With fewer jobs, competition increases and employers may have greater opportunity to hire someone without a criminal background (Family Justice, 2009). As rural economies are being transformed people involved in the criminal justice system may be at a disadvantage if they did not have the chance to learn trades that are in demand while they were incarcerated (Family Justice, 2009).

Transportation in rural areas is another important factor impacting employment and successful reentry. Inherently, rural communities are sparsely populated over a large geographic area. There are often considerable distances between employment and residential areas, and most rural communities are bereft of any meaningful public transportation. Access to a reliable automobile is a near necessity for employment in a rural area. Persons who have been incarcerated for long periods of time often lose their driver’s license, and even when they are able to obtain a license upon release, they may not have access to a vehicle. When social services and government offices are far away, people involved in the justice system must rely on the help of friends and family to get them where they need to go (Family Justice, 2009).

Finally rural communities typically have fewer social services than cities and suburbs. In rural communities residents typically travel long distances to access healthcare, a food bank, or a counselor. These constraints make it even more difficult to meet all the demands of work, family, and probation or parole. To get the services they need, people often must secure transportation and child care (Family Justice, 2009).

HOUSING AND THE REINTEGRATION PROCESS

Research indicates that successful reintegration programs are ones that effectively target risk factors highly correlated with criminal conduct (STLJ, 2006). These include antisocial attitudes, negatively influential associates, temperament and personality factors, a history of antisocial behavior, family factors, and low levels of educational, vocational or financial achievement (OJC, 2005). Moreover, successful reintegration efforts are typically *behavioral* programs centered on improving a client’s present circumstances and immediate risk factors and involve *action-oriented* tasks where ex-offenders are engaged in activities that help resolve their difficulties (STLJ, 2006).

Housing is at the core of the reentry process. Readjusting to life outside a correctional facility can be a stressful and difficult process for ex-offenders, and many who are unable to cope with their new realities often manifest their anxieties in re-arrest (Black and Cho, 2004). A stable residence,

however, provides the platform upon which other supportive services can be administered to address an ex-offender's other needs. Without a safe housing option, substance abuse treatment, mental health care and job opportunities can be compromised (CRJ 2001).

Unfortunately, when the over half-million prisoners return home, finding adequate housing is often the most challenging barrier to reintegrating themselves into their community. Many ex-offenders are ill-equipped to obtain housing, lacking government identification and other essential resources. For even the most prepared, only a handful of housing options are immediately available to an ex-offender. 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 are just some of many factors that can complicate the process of obtaining housing (The Urban Institute, 2006). As such, many ex-offenders are likely to be homeless for varying amounts of time, bouncing through homeless shelters or the homes of friends and family who may or may not be positive influences. Ex-offenders with a history of mental illness, thus having an array of additional needs upon release, are even more likely to be homeless (The Urban Institute, 2006). Many other ex-offenders find themselves recommitting crimes and returning to prison shortly after their initial release.

For the recently released, it is clear that an ex-offender's ability to secure housing and the rates of homelessness and recidivism are intimately linked. A 1999 study by the Vera Institute of Justice indicates that the highest percent of re-arrests occur in the first three months after release from prison, a critical period in reentry where the ex-offender likely has the most needs and the smallest capacity to be self-sufficient. The study also indicates that ex-offenders who went to shelters were found to be seven-times more likely to abscond from parole than those who went home to their families. Furthermore, a 1996 study conducted by the Center for Housing Policy found that two-thirds of former prisoners who did not have appropriate housing recommitted crimes within the first twelve months of release, whereas only one quarter of those who obtained housing re-offended in the same time frame.

III. REENTRY HOUSING OPTIONS IN RURAL AREAS

Housing for formerly incarcerated persons usually conjures up images of halfway houses or group homes. While these housing types are prevalent among ex-offenders, they do not accurately represent the breadth or nature of housing options needed for successful reentry into communities. Formerly incarcerated persons require a range of housing options. Optimally, returning prisoners should have access to specialized and supportive housing options that provide supervision and services upon release. Transition into longer-term housing such as an affordable rental unit is also vital to the reentry process. Some formerly incarcerated persons may not require highly supervised housing, and may be ready for privately owned or subsidized rental housing upon or shortly after their release. Ultimately, a range of housing options provides for a more healthy community in

general, and is fundamental for successful prisoner reentry.

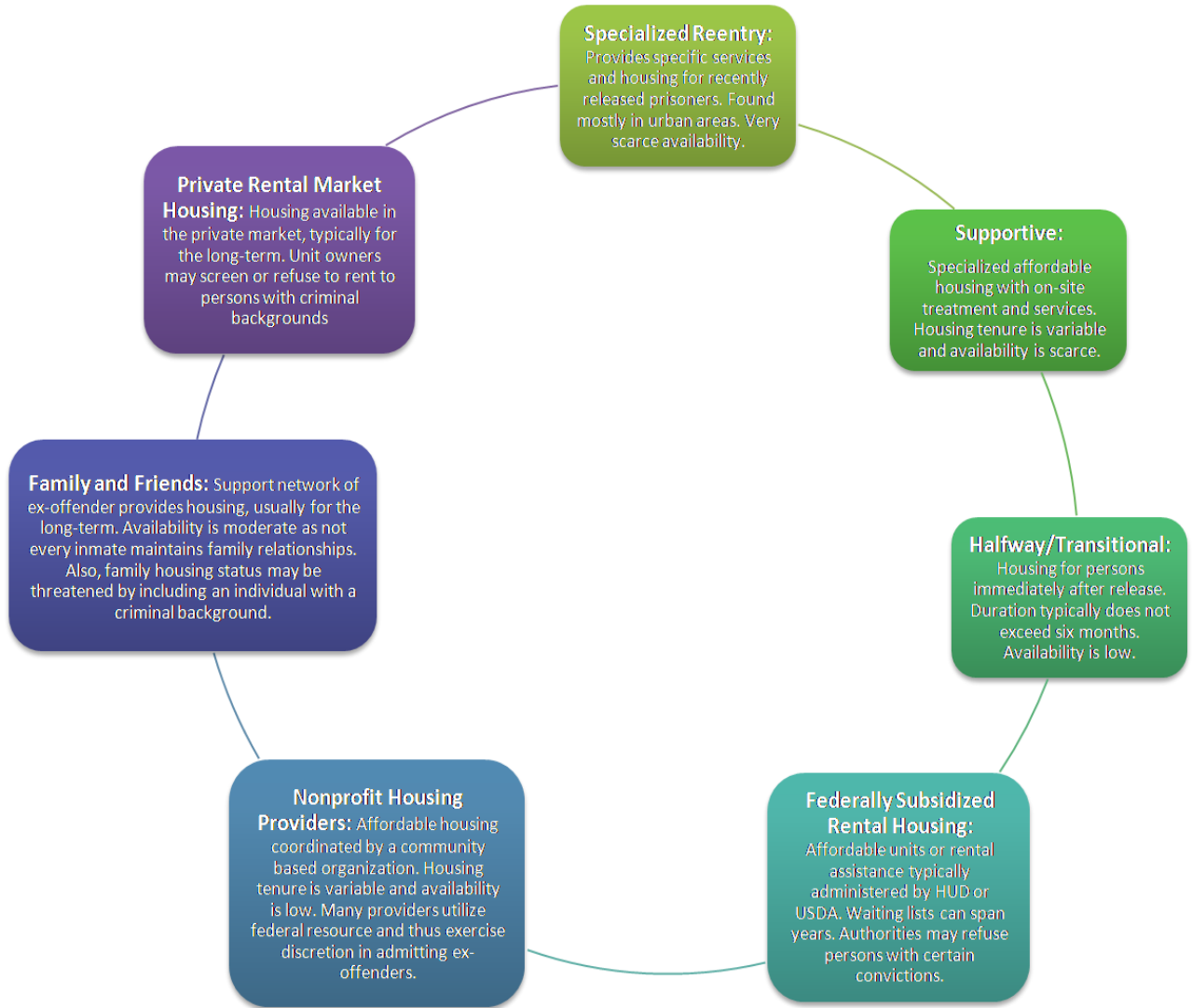


Figure 1.1 Complete Housing Continuum for Formerly Incarcerated Persons (partially adapted from the AIDS Housing of Washington)

In reality, most communities do not provide or have access to the full range of housing options needed to adequately house persons returning from jail or prison. Gaps or shortcomings in this continuum are even greater in rural communities. In many rural areas, the only housing options available are homeownership and a small stock of unsubsidized rental housing. The opportunities and obstacles associated with each housing option are described below.

Private Market Rental Housing

The private housing market represents approximately 97 percent of the total housing stock (CRJ, 2001). While private, market-rate housing is a universally available long-term housing option, securing such a unit is not without challenges for an ex-offender. Many property owners may screen

or refuse to rent to persons with criminal histories. Beyond this, the costs of housing remain the biggest barriers for a returning prisoner; the existence of financial assets plays a substantial role in determining whether a consumer can rent or purchase housing (CRJ, 2001). As such, large sections of the private housing market can remain out of returning prisoners' reach, if they are excluded from public rental assistance programs.

Family and Friends

Many returning prisoners utilize their family or other support systems for housing upon release. Living with relatives provides a potentially long-term housing option at minimal cost, and may provide the ex-offender with the emotional support needed during the beginning of the reentry process. While living with a family member or significant other can be both affordable and nourishing for a returning prisoner, this option nonetheless remains out of reach for many ex-offenders. Family conflicts, lack of an immediate family, or a family hesitance to reincorporate the formerly incarcerated person back into their lives are common barriers facing ex-offenders. Moreover, public housing authorities (PHAs) can evict all members of a household for the criminal activities committed by any one member or guest (CRJ, 2001). Such a policy may leave families living in subsidized housing reluctant to provide housing to returning prisoners. In addition, conditions of parole may also prohibit returning prisoners from living with family members or friends who have criminal records (NHLW, 2008).

Nonprofit, Faith or Community-based Housing: Supportive, Transitional and Specialized Reentry Housing

Local nonprofits developing and operating affordable housing units is a promising option for returning prisoners. Short (zero to 90 days) and long-term (one to four years) transitional and supportive housing may be available to individuals upon release. These facilities provide intensive supervision and support networks, offering a range of services such as family counseling, medical services, socialization skills, and individual and group psychotherapy. Transitional housing usually caters to ex-offenders with common, specific needs such as women-only facilities, facilities for non-violent ex-offenders, persons with HIV/AIDS, or persons with addiction (Black and Cho, 2004). These organizations may also operate residences similar to board-and-care homes or rooming houses where the residents share common living areas. When available, this form of housing may be viable for formerly incarcerated persons whose source of income is insufficient for rent.

Nonprofit, faith or community-based housing is typically financed by a variety of government subsidies, making the units more affordable than market-rate rental housing. For ex-offenders unable to secure housing with stable family members or friends, these options are valuable alternatives. The Vera Institute of Justice has found that a supportive presence at the moment of reentry is a key indicator of success across the board, including a correlation with lower drug use, greater likelihood of securing employment, and less criminal activity (Black and Cho, 2004). The necessity of parole supervision varies by housing provider, although housing programs designed specifically for ex-offenders usually require collaboration with the state or local department of corrections.

Substance abuse treatment centers may also offer short-term housing assistance, usually ranging from one to three months, as well as operating sober living environments known as halfway houses. In rural communities structured or semi-structured housing for reentering offenders is at a premium. Substance abuse treatment centers can, however, offer forms of transitional supportive housing that are able to finance their operations through sources including substance abuse treatment contracts, Medicaid, private insurance and private pay. Given the high correlation of substance abuse and incarceration, this type of housing may be valuable to include in a housing plan for reentering offenders.

Unfortunately, along with individual discretion to exclude formerly incarcerated persons, the most pressing obstacle facing ex-offenders is the limited availability of community-based transitional or supportive housing units. Permanent supportive housing has not traditionally been designed for ex-offenders, and little attention has been placed on the housing needs of recently released prisoners (The Urban Institute, 2006). Moreover, the majority of supportive and special-needs housing serving ex-offenders does so because this population is often homeless or at risk of becoming homeless (The Urban Institute, 2006). With minimal funds dedicated to reentry programs, housing providers are often forced to utilize homeless assistance resources and funding targeted to individuals with an array of special needs to finance their projects (Black and Cho, 2004). In recent years, a new source of federal funding has been created to finance ex-offender housing and supportive services. More information on the Second Chance Act and its grant programs are available on page 15.

Federally Subsidized Rental Housing and Rental Assistance¹

Targeted government housing assistance plays a significant role in the ability of low-income households to obtain and maintain decent housing, and this assistance has directly improved housing conditions for millions of low-income rural Americans. The nation's federal housing effort has evolved into a complex patchwork of programs typically administered by a public housing authority (PHA). Housing initiatives that reach rural communities are primarily funded and administered through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development (RD), the Internal Revenue Service and others. HUD is the dominant source of federal funding for low- and moderate-income housing nationwide, while USDA RD programs target rural housing needs specifically, although the department receives a relatively small amount of total federal housing dollars.

Many federal rural housing programs have gone through dramatic transformations in recent years due to budget cuts and program alterations. A prime example has been the reductions in the USDA's Section 515 rural rental program. In Federal Fiscal Year (FY) 1994 the program funded the development of 11,542 units of affordable rental housing. In contrast, only 743 units were developed under the program in FY 2006, reflecting a reduction of more than 90 percent from mid-1990s production levels (HAC, 2010).

¹ An in-depth analysis of federally subsidized housing programs and their policies toward ex-offenders is available in appendix B.

Today, a significant portion of the properties in the federally subsidized housing portfolio are at risk of loss. Physical deterioration, or owners' desires to remove the affordability restrictions, threatens the continued availability of these apartments as decent, affordable homes for low-income people. For example, under current law, owners of USDA Section 515 rural rental housing projects that received loans prior to 1989 can request prepayment of the loan balances and convert the projects to market-rate housing. In recent years it is estimated that USDA Section 515 owners have prepaid loans on over 50,000 affordable homes, removing the mortgage provisions requiring them to house low-income residents (HAC, 2008). There are similar preservation challenges among HUD funded affordable rental properties in rural areas.

Supportive services included in public housing are typically designated for the elderly or persons with disabilities. Moreover, criminal justice supervision is typically not included in this form of housing as well. While public housing is a long-term option for ex-offenders, waitlists are generally filled with thousands of families with an average waiting period of almost three years (The Urban Institute, 2006). HUD's "one strike and you're out rule" allows PHAs to evict and deny housing to persons with a history of criminal behavior or use of drugs or alcohol at their discretion, often leading to the exclusion of this population from many federally-subsidized housing programs (The Urban Institute, 2006). In recent years, the Department of Agriculture has also begun to implement measures that have resulted in the exclusion of formerly incarcerated persons from Rural Development rental housing (NHLW, 2008).

The Second Chance Act

Public acknowledgement of the impact of support systems in decreasing recidivism has led to the development of a dedicated funding source for reentry initiatives. Signed into law in April 2008, the Second Chance Act (H.R. 1593) authorizes \$165M for federal grants to government agencies and community and faith-based organizations to support reintegration efforts. The legislation also directs, but does not require, the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to consider giving federal prisoners longer stays in halfway houses (FAMM, 2009). The Second Chance Act also authorizes funding to states, tribal and local prosecutors to develop qualified drug treatment programs that are alternatives to incarceration but excludes individuals convicted in federal court from this option (FAMM, 2009). Congress has steadily increased funding for the legislation over the past two years, though all appropriations have fallen short of the Second Chance Act's full authorization. In FY 2009, \$25M was appropriated for Second Chance Act programs, \$10M of which was allocated to nonprofit organizations (NRRC, 2009). In FY 2010, however, the DOJ was awarded \$114M for reentry initiatives, \$100M of which were specifically designated for Second Chance Act programs. The President's FY11 budget request includes \$100M for Second Chance Act grants.

One of the Second Chance Act's largest initiatives is its Demonstration Grants program which provides matching grants to state and local governments for reentry efforts (NAEH, 2010). In 2009, over \$7.7M was distributed to 15 grantees in 13 states (NRRC, 2009). According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, most demonstration grant applicants are state corrections departments and successfully grantees are typically those who work closely with housing advocates to ensure that a strong, coordinated housing plan is implemented for returning prisoners in the community. The Second Act's other key initiative is the two-year Mentoring Grants program which are available to nonprofit organizations who provide an array of reentry services. Employment assistance, substance abuse treatment, housing, family programming, mentoring, and victims support, are among the supported programs. Providing housing for ex-offenders is not a required program component for mentoring grant applicants and its inclusion does not appear carry significant sway in the grant award process. Mentoring grant recipients are also required to measure the success of their programs and report achievements or setbacks in reducing recidivism rates, crime and drug abuse among other factors (NRRC, 2010). The 2009 Mentoring grant cycle distributed \$10M in awards of up to \$300,000 to 36 organizations in 21 states (NRRC, 2009). Other Second Chance Act programs include Offender Reentry Substance Abuse Treatment grants, Reentry Research, the establishment of the National Adult and Juvenile Offender Reentry Resource Center and the Federal Reentry Initiative, which aims to provide guidance to the BOP for reentry planning. There are no housing-specific funding grants currently available under the Act and while most of the competitive grants available to the public are housed in the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) within the DOJ, the Department of Labor was also awarded over \$108M for employment related reentry initiatives.

IV. INITIATIVES IN PRACTICE: RURAL PRISONER REENTRY

The four case studies demonstrate various approaches currently utilized to serve formerly incarcerated persons returning home to rural communities. Funding streams specifically dedicated for reentry initiatives are scarce and the models described below illustrate how rural reentry practitioners are creatively housing ex-offenders through an array of programs and partnerships. Case study participants were chosen to reflect the range of possibilities and constraints common to rural reentry efforts. The Southern Illinois Coalition for the Homeless in Marion, IL has created a de facto housing pipeline through partnering with a nearby transitional housing and supportive services provider. On the opposite end, the Southwest Georgia Housing Development Corporation in Cuthbert, GA created the Millennium Center, a full service residential community centered on drug rehabilitation and family counseling. The Community Offender Reentry Program in Duluth, MN has successfully tapped into federal Second Chance Act funding for its reentry initiatives and has learned how to effectively navigate housing rules and restrictions for its formerly incarcerated clients. Lastly, the Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative in the northwestern region of the state is an illustration of how states can create coordinated, large-scale reentry plans and implement such a program through satellite centers and close collaborations.

Creating a Local Pipeline:

The Southern Illinois Coalition for the Homeless in Marion, Illinois²



Based in Marion, Illinois of Williamson County, the Southern Illinois Coalition for the Homeless serves the 27 southernmost counties within the state. The Coalition’s mission is to provide affordable housing and services to the local homeless population as well as those at-risk of becoming homeless. The Coalition also aims to partner with organizations and individuals to eliminate the causes of homelessness. The southern Illinois region is very rural, with nearby localities maintaining populations that range from 300 to 40,000 residents. Just four emergency shelters currently operate in this vast service area, creating a number of demands for Coalition staff.

The Coalition has provided housing to formerly incarcerated persons since its inception in 1991 after finding that many homeless persons also held criminal records of varying severity. Coalition staff list ex-offender exclusions to public housing, private housing costs, and transportation as the most difficult obstacles in an ex-offender’s path toward successful reentry. The Williamson County Housing Authority currently admits formerly incarcerated persons into public housing residences on a case-by-case basis but requires that persons with criminal background have a stable housing record for at least five years to be considered and excludes persons with methamphetamine related offenses and sex offenses. Such guidelines effectively exclude recently released ex-offenders from consideration as well as many drug offenders, a population that comprises the majority of the Coalition’s clientele.

In the private sector, the minimum fair market rent for area apartments is higher than most formerly incarcerated persons can afford in the first months of reentry. Many ex-offenders can find only part-time or minimum wage employment, with most making less than the \$10 or \$15 per hour that would be needed to support rent payments and associated costs of living. Transportation is another factor that strains the already limited housing and employment options for formerly incarcerated persons in Southern Illinois. In Marion, as in many nearby localities, public transportation is nonexistent and many ex-offenders do not have the funds for a car or gas. Given the compounding economic constraints, ex-offenders in Southern Illinois return home often to the same environment and influences that helped lead to their incarceration. Others, choosing not to return home or unable to do so, become homeless. The consistent overlap between the Southern Illinois homeless and formerly incarcerated populations has led the Coalition to develop more programs tailored to serving persons recently released from jail or prison.

The Coalition currently operates 12 transitional and 10 permanent supportive housing units. Of each type, two units are allocated to single individuals and the remainder designated for families. While the units are subsidized by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the

² The information in this case study is based on an interview conducted on March 22, 2010.

Coalition does not face any restrictions in placing formerly incarcerated persons into scattered-site housing. The Coalition houses most of its ex-offenders in its transitional housing units, as tenants must only meet the federal definition of homelessness to qualify.³ A smaller number of formerly incarcerated persons are eligible for the Coalition's permanent supportive housing, which is designated for persons with verifiable disabilities. The housing is in compliance with the federal definition of disabled which includes substance abuse and dual diagnosis, a condition where an individual has both a substance addiction and a mental illness. Tenants of both housing types are required to pay a minimum of \$50 per month for housing, and the Coalition has the authority to charge up to 30 percent of the client's income for rent. The Coalition grants tenants considerable flexibility in payments, allowing residents to work in exchange for rent, pay deposits in installments, or reduce rent according to income changes or high utility builds.

On average, tenants remain in transitional housing for 12 months and in permanent supportive housing for 16 to 18 months. The ex-offender population served by the Coalition is most often comprised of individuals with drug related offenses who are typically overcoming substance addiction and have a host of immediate needs beyond the basic essentials upon release. A number of Coalition clients have also been imprisoned for violent crimes and the organization screens its clients for sex offenders, as compliant with HUD requirements. In conjunction with both housing programs, the Coalition provides case management services for all clients and holds regular events where clients participate in financial literacy workshops and gain parenting, housekeeping and other life skills.

During the past five years, the Coalition has formalized its partnership with the H Group, a mental health and substance abuse treatment facility also located in Marion, Illinois. While not specifically intended for the formerly incarcerated population, this collaboration has allowed some ex-offenders to make the transition from prison to independent living with minimal interruption. The H Group provides three types housing: an 85-unit non-federal halfway house, four units of permanent supportive and seven community subsidized units. The H-Group's halfway house provides shelter for individuals who are in need of a structured, supportive living environment, and about 80 percent of current residents are offenders who are either serving the remainder of their prison sentence at the H Group or are in need of immediate housing after release from state and local corrections facilities. Other halfway house clients are individuals who are either transitioning out of an intensive residential treatment facility or are receiving outpatient services but have a poor

³ The federal definition of homelessness as defined in the United States Code includes an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is: a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill); an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

recovery environment. Most individuals remain at the H group halfway house for 90 days but are allowed to live in the facilities for up to six months. All halfway house residents are assigned a case manager and counselor who work to develop an individualized service program to help pave the way toward successful community reintegration. Halfway house residents are also required to attend counseling and complete a life skills program, and many utilize the H Group's substance abuse treatment, vocational education classes and employment preparation programs.

Other facilities operated by the H group have a more specific focus on the mentally ill. The H Group's four permanent supportive housing units are subsidized by the Department of Mental Health and residents must be at least 200 percent below the poverty level to qualify. For three of the four units, individuals must be dually diagnosed with verifiable a substance addiction and a serious mental illness (SMI), with the last unit reserved for persons with only mental illnesses. The H Group's seven community properties exclusively serve residents with mental illnesses.

Once an individual has moved from the H Group facilities and onto the Coalition's transitional or permanent supportive housing, H Group staff continues to follow up with each client on a quarterly basis. The Coalition's supportive services are supplemented by the H Group's substance abuse treatment and counseling. In effect, the collaboration between these organizations creates a housing pipeline for formerly incarcerated persons during the months of greatest vulnerability, allowing ex-offenders to stay away from their old networks and neighborhoods while also receiving intensive counseling, case management and housing stability. Due to public restrictions on both ends, however, the Coalition-H Group partnership is limited to ex-offenders with serious mental illnesses. With no funding allocated specifically for formerly incarcerated persons, the H Group staff describe the support and resources available to ex-offenders as "piecemeal," with many ex-offenders excluded from other longer term housing opportunities similar to the Coalition's offerings. According to H Group staff, many ex-offenders who are discharged from the halfway house are headed to homeless shelters or other equally transient housing options.

For the ex-offenders who are able to progress through the housing pipeline, Coalition staff cite the strong short-term transitional housing offered by the H Group as key to ex-offender success in their longer term housing. Coalition staff deems the experiences ex-offenders have during their stay at the H Group as "invaluable," as ex-offenders graduating from the short-term facility have already experienced intensive counseling and feel a greater sense of independence, self-esteem and readiness to move forward. Moreover, ex-offenders entering Coalition housing from the H Group usually have steady employment, are sober and in counseling, and are under the supervision of a probation officer. According to Coalition staff, ex-offenders who have left the H Group and entered Coalition permanent or transitional housing have been their most successful residents.

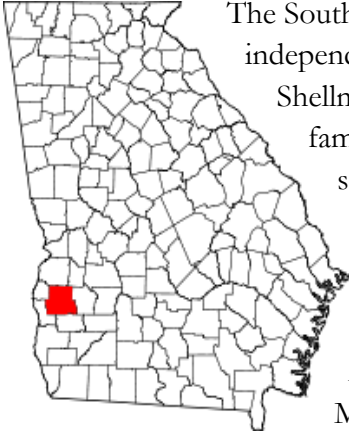
While the Coalition maintains a strong and seemingly fluid relationship with The H Group, a similarly tight-knit relationship is absent between the Coalition and the state or local parole officers. Sharon Hess, Executive Director of the Coalition, states that the two parties maintain open lines of

communication and have a confidentiality agreement which permits the Department of Corrections parole officers and the Coalition case managers to share information and updates about clients as needed. Coalition staff feels that a relationship beyond this would be “unnecessary,” given that most ex-offenders living in Coalition housing have regained a sense of stability and self-sufficiency.

The Coalition serves the ex-offender population through the use of funding streams designed for other special needs populations, and the organization remains unable to provide housing specifically for formerly incarcerated persons under current financial and regulatory constraints. Hess notes one of the most difficult subgroups of the ex-offender population to house is single persons. To meet this need, the Coalition is currently working to develop an 8-unit apartment development tailored specifically for single ex-offenders. Similar to their other facilities, the Coalition intends to provide case management, mental health and substance abuse treatment and services on-site and will allow couples to live in the facilities together. The Coalition is currently in negotiations with the Williamson County Housing Authority (WCHA) about the feasibility of such a project and is seeking to obtain financing through project-based Section 8 subsidies. There are a host of financing and logistical issues yet to be settled and the Coalition has met resistance from the WCHA in attempts to move forward with the project. WCHA is thus far supportive of the endeavor, although felony restrictions enforced in the new development may be tougher than the Coalition’s current standards. Nevertheless, the Coalition is confident that the project will retain its integrity as an ex-offender specific housing development.

A Services-Enriched Drug Rehabilitation Center:

The Southwest Georgia Housing Development Corporation's Millennium Center in Cuthbert, Georgia⁴



The Southwest Georgia Housing Development Corporation (SWGA) was formed as an independent nonprofit corporation in 1997 by the local housing authorities in Cuthbert, Shellman, Arlington, and Fort Gaines. SWGA's mission is to provide housing for families of low-to moderate-income and the organization serves seven counties in southwest Georgia (Calhoun, Clay, Early, Quitman, Randolph, Stewart, and Webster). The SWGA is located in Randolph County, is one of the poorest counties in Georgia with over 27 percent of the residents living below the poverty line and a per capita income at 60 percent of the state average.

Among its seven housing developments, the SWGA owns and operates the Millennium Center for Family Development, a substance abuse treatment facility created for women and their families. Built with the mission to reunite families that have been broken primarily because of drug abuse and end family patterns of drug and alcohol dependency, the Millennium Center is the one of a handful of facilities in the United States that allows its clients to bring their spouse or life partner and children to live on-site during treatment, a model taken from a now dissolved supportive housing program in Florida. The majority of tenants are referred to SWGA by the local court system through the Drug Court Program, the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or the Child Protective Services. In some instances, treatment at the Millennium Center is offered to individuals with drug offenses as an alternative to prison. According to the SWGA, nearly all Millennium Center residents are ex-offenders, with many residents having multiple misdemeanors or "relatively minor" felonies. SWGA further states that most of the residents do not have an adequate alternative housing option and that many clients would otherwise be homeless, in prison or living in a potentially abusive relationship. The Millennium Center provides a critical stepping stone for residents, that allows current clients to have greater access to public and private independent-living housing options in the future.

Recognizing the unavoidable overlap between persons struggling with substance abuse and persons with criminal histories, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DOCA) and SWGA reached an agreement as to how to assist individuals who fall into both categories. The two organizations arranged to admit ex-offenders on a case-by-case basis, screening for individuals with a history of violent crimes and sex offenses. Individuals on probation or parole are also screened for admittance; however, such status prevents an individual from being eligible to receive food stamps or similar benefits thus impacting the self-sufficiency potential of those applicants. The SWGA conducts backgrounds check and also works closely with their supportive services partner, Volunteers of America (VOA), which has its own set of criterion for Millennium Center residents.

⁴ The information in this case study is based on an interview conducted on March 31, 2010.

Upon fulfilling both SWGA and VOA requirements, the prospective tenants' files are sent to DOCA for final approval.

The 21 Millennium Center homes are divided into two, three, and four-bedroom family units made available to tenants through project-based housing vouchers. Situated on a gated campus, the center also includes playgrounds, picnic areas, and walking trails located in a secure, monitored environment with 24-hour staffing. Treatment at the Millennium Center is grouped into four phases: Orientation and Stabilization, Job Readiness and Ongoing Counseling, Employment and Transition and Aftercare, wherein VOA staff visits former clients at least seven times per month for one year. Over the course of 12 to 18 months residents move through the initial highly supervised regimented programs and graduate into more independent activities that allow them to enter and exit the facility freely.

While the SWGA operates and maintains Millennium Center housing, VOA provides and manages all of the on-site supportive services. Funded by the Georgia Department of Human Resources, VOA staff perform the initial diagnostic assessment, provides crisis prevention, psychiatric treatment, nursing assessment and care, individual and group outpatient services, counseling support groups and substance abuse treatment.

In addition to therapy and substance abuse treatment, residents have access to a satellite campus of the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education (GDTAE). A unit of the GDTAE, Albany Technical College, was built on-site to provide GED certification, college, and job training courses to residents. Attending classes, however, can be quite difficult for many Millennium Center residents according to VOA staff. Many, if not all, Millennium Center residents are recipients of TANF aid or aid through another state program, and such funding streams require that recipients receive at least 25 hours of counseling per week. Individuals can get credit for their GED courses only if they are not receiving public aid. Moreover, the therapy provisions attached to public aid effectively prevents its recipients from attending daytime courses. Evening classes at Albany are scattered and inconsistent throughout the year, keeping the educational and vocational goals at bay for many residents.

Other Millennium Center adult clinical services include life skills development, parenting programs, case management, and anti-domestic violence programs. For the children of the Millennium Center clients, the First Steps Child Development Center provides on-site therapeutic childcare. The activities for the child are designed to engage the head of household in the child's development as well as address the child's potential developmental delays created as a result of the parent's addiction. All participating children also receive individual, group, and family counseling services and have access to special counselor assigned in the local school system to assist the children.

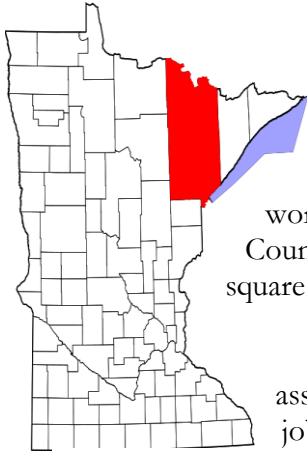
While a collaborative spirit rests at the core of the Millennium Center development, SWGA staff nonetheless assert that the primary obstacle for the center is finding more state agencies that will consistently refer potential clients to the center. The success of the Millennium Center

essentially rests on referrals, and the organization maintains a sort of “start-stop” relationship with many of the public agencies. With room for only 21 families, the demand for the Millennium Center and the available supply appear to ebb and flow incongruently. With limited space, social service liaisons at times attempt to place individuals into the facility only to find that the Millennium Center is at maximum capacity. Needing housing for clients immediately, the liaisons often lose interest in the facility given the center’s slow turnover. When there are available units, finding public agencies that have qualified clients immediately ready to be placed at the Millennium Center proves to be difficult. Communication issues also appear when attempting to admit clients who are still serving prison sentences into the center. Many individuals do not have strong support networks to obtain their personal documentation for them, and there is no structured liaison within the prison system to assist in these small but critical reentry needs.

SWGA staff has concerns that such communication issues may also impact its funding streams. The center’s lack of a waiting list or other evidence of demand may reduce incentives for government officials to continue supporting the program, says Mattox, despite the fact that the center is highly utilized. Nevertheless, effective public-private partnerships are what ultimately led to the creation of the Millennium Center. The development required 18 different funding streams with primary assistance from the Department of Agriculture Rural Development and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Other partners include the city of Cuthbert, Randolph County, First State Bank of Randolph, Regions Bank, the Georgia Department of Labor, the Georgia Department of Human Resource, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Utilizing Existing Resources:

The Community Offender Reentry Program in Duluth, Minnesota⁵



Founded in 2006, the Community Offender Reentry Program (CORP) is based in Duluth, Minnesota, a modestly urban area with approximately 86,000 residents. A subset of SOAR Career Solutions, CORP assists recently released ex-offenders. A county jail, federal prison camp, regional corrections center and work release facility are all within or near the CORPs service area of Saint Louis County. Outside of the Duluth MSA, the region is rural with about 32 residents per square mile.

CORP's parent company is SOAR Career Solutions, an employment assistance organization which initially planned for CORP to work primarily as a job preparation resource for the recently released. As the organization began serving ex-offenders, however, CORP staff found that the majority of clients were dealing with a range of immediate needs that prevailed over long-term employment stability. Confronted with the realities of their clientele, CORP adapted its services and now operates as an intensive case management center and an ex-offender mentoring program.

According to CORP staff, while a significant portion of their clientele is under probation supervision by the Arrowhead Regional Corrections, a large number of released ex-offenders have served their entire sentence and are under no supervision. These clients are thus reentering society on only the strength of their previous relationships which may or may not be strained. Since 2006, CORP has served 168 mostly male ex-offenders who are returning from local, state and federal prison or jail. CORP's clientele is very diverse; whereas some locally housed clients have served light sentences typically of less than one year, many of CORP's state and federal ex-offenders are returning home after spending decades behind bars.

With a staff of two case managers, CORP begins case management in the prerelease stage, typically conducting intake while individuals are still incarcerated. During intake, CORP staff meets with clients individually and develop a case plan which usually includes a guide to attaining housing, transportation, treatment for chemical dependencies, treatment for mental health and assistance in employment preparation. Administering a prerelease intake process requires a strong partnership with corrections and the CORP director says that the organization has a very fluid relationship with state and local corrections agencies and regularly receives referrals from corrections agency staff to work with new clients.

Following the intake session, CORP continues its intensive case management upon the ex-offender's release. The CORP program is voluntary and has a flexible structure that varies between the two case managers. Clients tend to meet with their case managers at least once per week and move into less regimented schedules once their immediate needs have been satisfied. CORP's office building is shared with the local probations office, allowing for a close collaboration among the two

⁵ The information in this case study is based on an interview conducted on April 15, 2010.

reentry stakeholders. The CORP staff director describes the relationship as a “preventative partnership,” as their teamwork helps connect ex-offenders to community resources, medication, and employment opportunities in a timely manner and allows both organizations to serve more individuals. After obtaining releases from their clients, CORP has also begun providing the probations officers with a list of the individuals they work with, their current living arrangements and a short summary of the each client’s progress, allowing for better follow up and monitoring during the first critical months of reentry.

CORP does not provide housing services, instead choosing to utilize the existing community resources in and around Duluth. One of the primary goals, according to CORP staff, is to ensure that clients have no medication lapses from the time between release from jail or prison to the time clients have found stable shelter. To meet this goal, CORP case managers make use of local emergency shelters which helps individuals find health-related resources in addition to providing temporary housing. CORP case managers also heavily utilize Board and Lodges around the Duluth area. Board and Lodges are group residential housing facilities (GRH) that are typically privately owned. About seven facilities are located in the CORP service area and, in order to be eligible for housing, prospective tenants must have a disability, chemical dependency or some form of mental health issue. CORP staff notes that almost all of their clients are working through a chemical dependency or mental health issue, and Board and Lodge facilities are thus highly utilized. Further,

GRH facilities like Board and Lodges allow residents to stay in their units indefinitely. Board and Lodges also allow for immediate placement, acting as a reliable transitional step for recently released ex-offenders. Furthermore, the county in which the Board and Lodge is located pays the housing costs for the resident in its entirety (around \$1500 per month) if the resident is unemployed. Once the tenant has begun work, they are expected to set aside a portion of their income toward rent. The downside of some GRH facilities, according to CORP staff, is that these residences are home to individuals who may have active alcohol or drug dependencies. The shared-room floor plan of these facilities can help spread negative influences quickly, providing temptation and distraction to individuals attempting to maintain their sobriety. In addition, the 100 percent rental assistance, while very helpful for recently released, “does not create motivation to secure employment,” says CORP staff. Taken together, these factors reduce the appeal of Board and Lodges by CORP case managers, but are nonetheless helpful and readily available transitional housing units open to their clientele.

Many CORP clientele with chemical dependencies also utilize area halfway houses, which typically have 90-day maximum stay policies and require tenants to find and maintain employment. CORP also works with several regional housing providers who supply units for persons with special needs and disabilities, but those types of facilities have strict eligibility requirements and are usually inaccessible to the majority of CORP’s clientele.

CORP case managers attempt to utilize public housing and housing vouchers for clients who are further along into the reentry process. The CORP staff, however, remarks that a public housing authority (PHA) is “never an immediate solution,” as they tend to have waiting lists that are at least

18 months long in the Duluth area, leaving federally funded housing an unrealistic housing option. Many ex-offenders are denied access to public housing because of their criminal record; however, CORP's parent organization, SOAR Career Solutions, has successfully appealed and overturned public housing denials for several of its clients.

Adding to CORP's available housing options around the northeastern Minnesota region is the organization's new contract with a local nonprofit affordable housing organization that manages five apartment buildings in the area. However, CORP has not taken advantage of this partnership due to concerns of the environment and current tenants of these apartments.

In 2009, CORP was awarded \$300,000 in federal Second Chance Act funds, the maximum allocation for recipients. CORP applied for the Second Chance Act Mentoring Grant which requires nonprofit organizations to provide a long-term mentoring program for ex-offenders in addition to essential transitional services. A substantial portion of the Second Chance Act funds has been used to reinstate the CORP mentoring initiative. Through this program, members of the community partner with formerly incarcerated persons, providing guidance and support during the mentees' reintegration process. CORP allows ex-offenders to be mentors on the condition that the individual has been sober and off parole for at least two years. Prior to receiving Second Chance Act funding, CORP staff describes its mentoring program as "stop-start," and the labor-intensive operation was outsourced to another supportive services organization in Duluth. Since the fall of 2009, the mentoring program is once again a CORP in-house endeavor and the organization has utilized some of the Second Chance Act funding to hire a mentoring coordinator as well as host speakers and engagements to enhance the mentoring initiative.

The organization has also utilized the two-year grant, which will expire in 2011, to add one case manager and one program assistant, increasing CORP staff from two to five individuals. Other grant allocations include funding for special activities for clients, consultants, office rent and staff development and training. CORP staff also set-aside \$35,000 of the Second Chance Act grant in order to develop a landlord guarantee fund, a resource designated for the payment of eviction fees to a private landlord who extends a lease to a CORP client that has turned disruptive. "We have found it effective to negotiate with housing providers to open their screening criteria to ex-offenders," says the CORP Staff Director. The organization has yet to tap into the funds, but considers it essential to their ability to open up new housing options for ex-offenders in the private market.

CORP's intensive case management model thrives due to the strength of the housing and supportive services throughout the community that are available to formerly incarcerated persons. The strong network also allows CORP staff to assist the segment of ex-offenders who have found housing with a family member or spouse but is seeking assistance for other needs. While extensive utilization of community resources can be effective in connecting ex-offenders with housing appropriate to their needs and independence level, CORP has faced several roadblocks when dealing with housing partners. Concerns over the environment and supervision have limited CORP's utilization of some of the local housing options and the organization does not have the influence to

insist on changes to the housing units. Facing these frustrations on a regular basis, CORP is interested in developing its own ex-offender housing but the four-year old organization currently does not have adequate resources for such an endeavor.

Developing a Statewide Initiative:

The Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative (MPRI) in Northwest Michigan



The mission of the Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative (MPRI) is to significantly reduce crime and enhance public safety by implementing a seamless system of services for offenders from the time of their entry to prison through their transition, community reintegration and aftercare in their communities. The present Northwest MPRI Comprehensive Plan grew out of a need to respond to changing MDOC policies and practices in the treatment of prisoners, parole board actions, and procedures used by parole supervision of reentering offenders. The targeted goals were to increase community safety and reducing the rate of return to prison.

The northwest region of Michigan is largely rural. Agriculture and tourism are the primary industries in the region and seasonal and other forms of short-term employment as the norm for many residents in the area. The Northwest Michigan Council of Governments (NWMCOG) is the administrative agency for MPRI in Northwest Michigan. It is a regional organization serving units of government, businesses, non-profits, community organizations, and individuals, whose mission is to build stronger communities and improve quality of life in Northwest Michigan. Founded in 1973, NWMCOG facilitates and manages programs for the ten counties in our region. Member counties are: Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford. Together, they span over 7,000 square miles, an area the size of the state of Connecticut. The ten counties are home to 404,000 year round residents. Population clusters are found in the Emmet, Grand Traverse, and Wexford Counties, homes of Petoskey, Traverse City, and Cadillac respectively.

The hallmarks of the NWMCOG are public-private partnership, innovation, collaboration, and sustainability. They provide a variety of programs and services within the region, with particular emphasis on partnerships, economy of scale, and leveraging resources to address common concerns among multiple organizations or across sectors. Their primary service categories are: workforce development; business and economic development; regional planning and community development, and community safety.

Program Description

Each year, approximately 285 former prisoners return to Northwest Michigan from state prisons and two-thirds of these ex-offenders qualify for Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative (MPRI) services. The MPRI model is a three-stage process that begins well before a prisoner’s release.

- **Getting Ready.** A COMPAS assessment is conducted when the offender first arrives at prison. The results of that assessment are combined with other collateral information. Sixty

percent of those scored medium to high risk for return to prison or violence when assessed using the COMPAS. Nearly seventy (70) percent of them needed housing services upon release. As the MDOC reviewed its policies and practices in order to contain prison growth and costs of operations, it became obvious that some of those who were incarcerated could be released safely to the community if the necessary services and resources for successful reentry were available to them. Together individual results are used to guide prison staff in the development of the TAP for each offender. Then through the time in prison, the offender works toward reaching goals that will help the participant prepare to return home.

- ***Going Home.*** As the participant prepares to reenter the community, the TAP is updated to include information about the participant's progress while in prison and anticipated needs upon reentry to the community. During the two months immediately preceding parole, the Parole Agent, accompanied by a group of community service providers, visits the prisoner in the prison in a meeting called *Prison In-Reach*. During this phase of reentry, the TAP for the participant is updated to include the most current information about where the returning citizen will live, how he or she will pay for the housing, and any special conditions of parole that may preclude some housing options. This pre-release interview is used to help the Parole Agent plan how to respond to the offender's needs.

During the last 30 days before release to the community, the Prison In-Reach Team meets with additional community service providers in a Transition Team meeting in the community. They use the information gathered during the interview to develop a Collaborative Case Management strategy to guide them in meeting the needs of the returning citizen. The Transition Team will work with the parole agent to meet the needs of the returning citizen throughout the length of parole.

- ***Staying Home.*** Safe affordable housing is essential to providing an environment where the reentering offender can attend to his or her needs that are risk factors for return to prison. Ex-offenders must navigate a range of challenges in order to access affordable housing. The Transition Team works with individuals to identify a housing option that works best for the individual's circumstances.

Available Housing Resources

The Northwest Michigan MPRI Comprehensive Plan uses a scattered site housing strategy for reentering offenders. Using the Collaborative Case Management strategy, staff help returning citizens apply for and access federally funded housing services when eligible. Additionally, Parole Agents use the Transition Teams to help MPRI participants gain access to other forms of State funded housing. Parole Agents provide critical technical assistance in the form of: 1.) knowledge of available community housing options, 2.) an understanding of Federal and State eligibility criteria, 3.)

and an understanding of the financial contributions each participant can make to his or her own housing.

With this information and the contributions of community partners, the Parole Agent can manage each case through a series of progressive changes in housing solutions. They begin with one of three client options: 1.) staying with family or friends, 2.) living in a specialized treatment setting such as residential substance abuse treatment, 3.) or renting a room at a hotel or motel. Then as the individual participant obtains his or her identification and establishes eligibility for a community housing option (if one exists), the participant is typically placed on a waiting list.

Some returning citizens are eligible for federal or state subsidized housing. When this is the case, the Parole Agent refers the individual to the community program with an available housing unit. However, many federal and state funded housing projects are full and have waiting lists. In addition, the public housing authorities often choose to exercise their right to restrict felons from entering their properties. Since a significant number of the reentering offenders have histories of criminal sexual conduct or violence, it is extraordinarily difficult for many of the returning citizens to navigate the mix of federal, state, and local policies.

There are two emergency shelters within the region, both of which are frequently at maximum capacity and have restrictions against offenders who have been convicted of criminal sexual conduct or violent crimes. There are no prisoner reentry transition houses within the region, as these types of developments are not economically viable in this region. The corrections approach to transitional housing requires 24-hour onsite staffing and the delivery of evidence-based treatment⁶ services at the location. Funding is provided at a nominal rate of \$20.00 per bed per day. The high overhead costs of leasing a building, utilities, insurance, and property maintenance combined with staffing costs easily reach \$250,000 per year. With a bed day rate of \$20.00 per day, it would require 12,500 bed days, or an average daily population of 34 people. This number is far larger than the total number of parolees requiring semi-structured, substance abuse related transitional housing in one county on any given day.

As a consequence of these factors, hotels and motels are often used as temporary housing placements for former prisoners. This approach has its own difficulties. For example, when residents of one community learned that a social service agency was intending to shelter ex-offenders at a hotel, community residents banded together and garnered the support of local elected officials. They were able to prevent the social service agency from renting. Cost is another barrier to the use of hotels and motels as housing for former prisoners. Off-season rates can be reasonable at \$600 per month; however, during prime tourist seasons, it is common for those rates increase to \$1,200 or \$1,400 per month.

⁶ Clinical decisions on forms of treatments are determined based on best evidence, either from the research literature or clinical expertise that incorporate the preferences and values of the client and family in the process. While the clinician may utilize the best evidence available, application and outcomes will differ based upon clients' values, preferences, concerns, and/or expectations.

Partnerships

The Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative (MPRI) in Northwest Michigan has an Advisory Council comprised of stakeholders from the community. The membership includes representatives from local offices of the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Michigan Department of Community Health, the Michigan Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Development, a variety of local social service agencies, law enforcement, and other interested community members.

Some of those who participate on the MPRI Advisory Council are members of advocacy groups working to end homelessness within the region. For example, the chair person for a Continuum of Care for homelessness sits on the regional Advisory Council and the Northwest Michigan MPRI Steering Team. A Deputy Warden, the Area Manager for Probation and Parole, one community representative, and the CEO of the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments are the co-chairs of the MPRI Steering Team which is responsible for planning and implementing MPRI services. .

Each year, the MPRI Community Coordinator and its co-chairs conduct an analysis of available community resources and the projected needs of those returning to the area for the next year. They then develop a Comprehensive Plan for meeting the needs of reentering citizens. This plan includes the use of Michigan Department of Corrections funds to procure housing and other services for reentering offenders who would not otherwise be able to obtain those services from programs funded by other sources.

Moving Forward

Future planning for reentry in Northwest Michigan will look toward the expansion of subsidized and unsubsidized housing options for those who have disabilities and those with histories of criminal sexual conduct or violence. MPRI has subsidized rent payments for ex-offenders residing in traditional as well as in “board and care” facilities for a limited period of time. These planning efforts will be conducted by the MPRI Steering Team in collaboration with other community housing coalitions and local law enforcement officials.

Successful reentry for returning ex-offenders requires the assistance of his or her Parole Agent and resource specialists who are familiar with ways to navigate the network of housing resources, combine funding from a variety of sources, and advocate for housing services with housing providers. Successful reentry also calls for representatives of the housing programs to provide information to the Steering Team, allowing the Comprehensive Plan for reentry to integrate specialized services with standard community strategies. This coordinated approach allows MPRI to greater leverage its funds to assist individual clients, meet the needs of returning offenders and protects the interests of housing providers.

V. LESSONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSIONS

Rural and urban communities across the nation are confronted with increasing numbers of recently released ex-offenders in need of shelter and support. The number of challenges facing an ex-offender on his road to reintegration and self-sufficiency are substantial but not insurmountable. Both strategic and spontaneous responses to ex-offender rates of recidivism, homelessness and drug abuse have slowly begun to transform and expand the process and possibilities of reentry. For rural communities, increased knowledge of their reentry needs is as critical as increased resources. This research report is one step toward building a better understanding of rural reentry. The literature and experiences of rural reentry housing providers included in this report have granted local, state and federal stakeholders access into the obstacles and opportunities embedded into the rural reintegration process. Several findings can be drawn from this research:

- There are deep gaps in the housing continuum for formerly incarcerated persons in rural areas. Immediately available short and moderate-term transitional housing is arguably most critical to successful reentry, and these facilities appear to be the most limited housing types in rural communities. Effective housing continuums for ex-offenders are those that have immediately accessible housing and a range of options that gradually move the tenant toward self-reliance, while also ensuring the individuals have sufficient supportive services.
- The process of transitioning home in both rural and urban communities ideally begins prior to release. Increased communication and coordination between liaisons working in correctional facilities and housing providers even one or two months in advance can help increase the chances of an ex-offender's success and stability upon release.
- Identifying and partnering with higher capacity organizations within one's state or region can lead to the development of effective housing continuums for formerly incarcerated persons. Smaller organizations working in reentry should seek out community-based organizations that, for example, have contracts with the Bureau of Prisons or are otherwise well situated to provide extensive housing and services to ex-offenders. Cultivating these types of relationships can allow smaller organizations to either serve more clients, focus more intently on one housing type, or both.
- A substantial portion of the incarcerated population has mental health or substance abuse issues. Increasingly, jails and prisons are serving as de-facto mental institutions. Upon release, many mentally ill and addicted prisoners have little support or access to medication and treatment which increases the likelihood of recidivating to criminal justice system. One common element in each of the reentry programs highlighted in this report was the provision of services. As such, access to some level of treatment and services within the shelter context is vital to success and well-being of the project, as well as people it serves.

- Adequate preparation for ex-offender housing requires collaboration among a range of community stakeholders. Local and state efforts to end homelessness should involve criminal justice professionals and housing coalitions in the strategic planning process. Criminal justice professionals can inform housing professionals with demographic descriptions of those reentering the community. These descriptions can include the numbers of persons reentering each year, the nature of their offenses, where ex-offenders are returning, and the types of housing best suited to those reentering the community. Additional details may include the prevalence rates of substance abuse and mental health problems. In some instances, it may be possible to obtain risk assessment scores predicting the likelihood of returning to prison for committing new crimes or violence. In turn, housing professionals can educate probation and parole agents about eligibility criteria, qualification for rental subsidy, and availability of housing units. Together, housing and corrections professionals can advocate for the types of housing necessary to prevent homelessness and improve community safety. It is also recommended that the conjoint planning for housing include disclosure of housing inventory, housing types, eligibility criteria, available subsidies, waiting lists, and other pertinent information about housing options. Such planning also needs to include information about the availability of alternative sources of housing such as specialized substance abuse and mental health transitional housing provided by the criminal justice system. When combined with actual utilization and projection data from both sources, it will be easier for the community to manage the housing needs of reentering offenders in general and inform planners so they can adapt to the needs of unique individuals returning from prison. In addition, this type of information may be reported to policy makers and funding sources for long range planning purposes.

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APPENDIX A. REENTRY RESOURCES FOR LOCAL PRACTITIONERS

Publications

An Affordable Home On Reentry: Federally Assisted Housing and Previously Incarcerated Individuals
National Housing Law Project, 2008

Reentry Partnerships: A Guide for States and Faith-Based and Community Organizations
Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2008

US Department of Justice Guide for Developing Housing for Ex-Offenders
US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, 2004

Organizations

The National Reentry Resource Center

The Resource Center, established by the Second Chance Act, provides assistance to the prisoner reentry field. The organization provides education, training, and technical assistance to states, tribes, territories, local governments, service providers, nonprofit organizations, and corrections agencies working on prisoner reentry.

Address: 100 Wall Street, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10005

Telephone: (646) 383-5721

Website: www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org

Email: info@nationalreentryresourcecenter.org

The International Community Corrections Association

The International Community Corrections Association, as a private, non-profit, membership organization, acts as the representative voice for residential and other community corrections programs. As such, it expects of its members compassion, belief in the dignity and worth of human beings, respect for individual difference and a commitment to quality care for its clients. It requires of its members the professional background, research and expertise necessary to ensure performance of effective quality services delivered with integrity and competence. ICCA affirms that its primary goal is the successful reintegration of the client into the community.

Address: 8701 Georgia Ave, Suite 402, Silver Spring, MD 20910

Telephone: (301) 585-6090

Fax: (301) 585-6094

Email: info@iccaweb.org

APPENDIX B. FEDERAL HOUSING PROGRAMS ADMISSION CRITERIA FOR FORMERLY INCARCERATED PERSONSⁱ

When planning for housing for reentering offenders, it's necessary to plan: 1. how to use the available housing inventory for the expected reentry population as a whole, 2. how to develop additional specialized housing such as treatment-oriented transitional and supportive housing, 3. how to meet the needs of those with histories of violence or criminal sexual conduct, 4. establish eligibility for financial support for individuals from federal sources like Social Security Disability and Veterans Benefits, and 5. how to deliver case management services that target both housing and community safety.

Such an approach requires assistance for parole agents who usually provide case management for the recently released. That technical assistance comes in three forms: 1. knowledge of programmatic matters, 2. an understanding of federal and state eligibility criteria, 3. and an understanding of the financial contributions each participant can make to his or her own housing. Housing professionals can provide that technical assistance. Together they can help each reentering offender navigate the complex array of housing services so that he or she can access appropriate housing services.

Programmatic matters include understanding of what happens at the housing unit. For example, when a property is managed as a group residence, the expectations of the resident differ from those present in an apartment complex with greater expectations of residents' ability to live independently. In the former situation, residents may share living areas, have a curfew, and have shared responsibilities for maintaining the residence. These circumstances may also involve a case manager visiting the residence to provide assistance in daily living activities. In the latter, a property manager may be responsible for collecting the rent and paying all utilities for the unit. Satisfactory use of either housing option requires the housing provider, the parole agent, and the participant each knowing what is expected before placement is made.

Understanding eligibility criteria includes knowledge of federal restrictions based on funding type and criminal history. It also includes knowledge of other sources of other special circumstances like disability, veterans' status, or marital status and how those factors impact an applicant's standing. For example, as mentioned elsewhere some federal housing programs prohibit sex offenders but the landlord operating the federal housing program may have additional housing options that do not have the same requirements. The ability of a case manager to understand the full range of options a given housing provider has available is essential.

Knowledge of the capacity of the individual participant to contribute financially to the costs of housing is also essential. For instance some forms of federally assisted housing require individuals to contribute a percentage of their incomes to rent. In some situations, the combination of fines, restitution, fees, and child support a reentering offender must pay are so cost prohibitive that even though he or she meets all other eligibility criteria for the housing unit, it is impossible for him or her to pay his portion of the rent even at the reduced rate allowed by the federal program. It's under

circumstances like these that the parole agent and the housing provider need to make it possible for the returning citizen to meet all his or her obligations.

The following sections describe each Federal Housing Program and important highlights about each of the above issues.

United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (RD)

Rural Development (RD) is an agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). It operates a broad range of programs that were formerly administered by the Farmers Home Administration to support affordable housing and community development in rural areas. The RD National Office is located in Washington, D.C., and is responsible for setting policy, developing regulations, and performing oversight. In the field, RD operations are carried out through the USDA's Rural Development offices. Rural Development State Offices administer programs in a state or multistate area. The organization of Rural Development offices within a state varies, but typically Area or District Offices supervise Local Offices (also termed county or community development offices) and do the processing and servicing of organizational loans and grants. Local Offices process single family housing applications, assist District Offices with organizational applications and servicing, and provide counseling to applicant families and backup servicing as needed.

Programmatic Issues: This is a loan or grant program made to families.

Eligibility Issues: Reentering Offenders may be eligible if they are reunified with their families.

Ability to Contribute: Reentering Offenders must demonstrate the ability to manage credit and make required payments.

Conclusion: This housing approach is not likely to be helpful immediately after release from prison, but may be helpful after the returning citizen has established him or herself in the community and financially.

RD Service Area

RD rural housing programs are available to eligible applicants in:

1. open country that is not part of, or associated with, an urban area or
2. any town, village, city, or place, including a densely settled area, that
 - a. is not part of, or associated with, an urban area and has a population not in excess of 10,000 and is rural in character, or
 - b. has a population in excess of 10,000 but not in excess of 20,000 and is not contained within a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) and has a serious lack of mortgage credit

as determined by the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Programmatic Issues: This is a loan or grant program made to individuals in very rural areas.

Eligibility Issues: Reentering Offenders may be eligible.

Ability to Contribute: Reentering Offenders must demonstrate the ability to manage credit and make required payments.

Conclusion: This housing approach is not likely to be helpful immediately after release from prison, but may be helpful after the returning citizen has established him or herself in the community and financially.

USDA-RD SECTION 515 RENTAL HOUSING PROGRAM

Overview. USDA's Section 515 Rural Rental Housing program has been the mainstay of the USDA's efforts to serve the poorest of the rural poor for the past 45 years. The Section 515 program provides mortgage loans to develop rental housing for very low-, low- and moderate-income households. Section 515 is administered by USDA Rural Development (RD) at the national, state, and local levels. The current Section 515 portfolio contains nearly 16,000 projects providing affordable rental units for over 445,000 rural households. Tenants pay basic rent or 30 percent of adjusted income, whichever is greater. RD rental assistance subsidy can be used to reduce tenant payments to 30 percent of their income. Tenants may receive rent subsidies from other sources as well. With an average annual income of \$9,785, most Section 515 residents have very low incomes. Additionally, nearly 60 percent of Section 515 residents are elderly or have disabilities (USDA, 2006).

Eligibility. Very low-, low-, and moderate-income families; elderly persons; and persons with handicaps and disabilities are eligible to live in Section 515-financed housing. Very low income is defined as below 50 percent of the area median income (AMI); low income is between 50 and 80 percent of AMI; moderate income is capped at \$5,500 above the low-income limit. Those living in substandard housing are given first priority for tenancy. When rental assistance is used, top priority is given to very low-income households.

Admissions for Applicants with Criminal Backgrounds. The owner generally has discretion in admitting applicants with criminal and drug offenses. 7C.F.R. § 3560.154(Bishop, 2007). Good cause is required for evicting tenants during or at the end of a lease term. Good cause for eviction can include criminal activity of a household member or guest (NHLW, 2008).

Associated Issues. Many federal rural housing programs have gone through dramatic transformations in recent years due to budget cuts and program alterations. A prime example has been the reductions in the Section 515 rural rental program. In Federal Fiscal Year (FY) 1994, the

program funded the development of 11,542 units of affordable rental housing. In contrast, only 486 units were developed under the program in FY 2006, reflecting more than a 90 percent reduction from mid 1990s production levels (HAC, 2006).

Programmatic Issues: This is a rent subsidy program which is severely limited in scope and not available in all areas even though they and the residents of the community meet the eligibility criteria.

Eligibility Issues: Reentering Offenders may be eligible if they meet income requirements and the service is available in the region.

Ability to Contribute: Reentering Offenders must make a financial contribution to the rent based on 30% of their income.

Conclusion: This housing approach is not likely to be available in all areas and when it is, it's likely to be available in limited scope. Offenders will need to compete with the general population for the service.

Additional Information. For additional information on Section 515 and RD, contact the National Office, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250; 202-690-1533, or your Rural Development State Office, which can be identified at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html. Copies of RD regulations and handbooks are available online at <http://rurdev.usda.gov/regs>.

USDA-RD SECTION 538 GUARANTEED RURAL RENTAL HOUSING PROGRAM

Overview. Under the Section 538 program, USDA RD guarantees loans made by private lenders for the development of affordable rural rental housing with at least five units. The program is used to guarantee permanent financing, or a combination construction and permanent loan. The current Section 538 portfolio contains just fewer than 150 properties. These Section 538 properties encompass a little over 8,000 units of affordable rental housing. Section 538 properties are located in 115 counties across the United States and almost all of these counties also have Section 515 properties.

Eligibility. Tenants in the Section 538 program must have incomes at or fewer than 115 percent of area median income at the time of initial occupancy.

Admissions for Applicants with Criminal Backgrounds. The owner generally has discretion in admitting applicants with criminal and drug offenses. 7C.F.R. § 3560.154 (Bishop, 2007).

Associated Issues. Section 538, which was created by Congress in 1996, differs in some important ways from USDA's longstanding Section 515 Rural Rental Housing Program. Section 538 focuses on partnerships between USDA and qualified lenders, whereas Section 515 makes loans directly to nonprofit or for-profit rural housing developers. Section 538 is intended to provide decent, affordable rental housing for low- and moderate-income rural households with incomes up to 115 percent of area median income, higher than those served by Section Programmatic Issues: This is a loan or grant program made to families.

Eligibility Issues: Reentering Offenders may qualify, if they are reunited with their families and if the service is available in their communities.

Ability to Contribute: Reentering Offenders must demonstrate the ability to manage credit and make required payments.

Conclusion: This housing approach is not likely to be of value to reentering offenders immediately after reentry. It is also available in many communities due to the limited scope of the national program.

Additional Information. For additional information on Section 538, contact Rural Development, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 0781, Washington, D.C. 20250; 202-690-4499; Contact your Rural Development State Office to find the location of the Local Office closest to you, or visit http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html. Copies of RHS regulations are available online at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/regs/>.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, often referred to as HUD, is the nation's primary federal agency focusing on issues of housing and community development. HUD works to create decent home and suitable living environment for Americans through addressing housing needs, improving and developing local communities, and enforcing fair housing laws (McCracken, 2005).

The structure of HUD includes divisions covering Housing and FHA, Community Planning and Development, Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, Public and Indian Housing, Policy Development and Research, and Public Affairs. Each state has field office and there are 29 area offices in major metropolitan areas (Bratt, 1998).

The following section provides a brief overview of federally assisted housing options that may be available for formerly incarcerated persons. This includes a general description of the program, its eligibility requirements, and policies toward applicants with criminal backgrounds.

HUD PUBLIC HOUSING

Overview. The Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Public Housing program is one of the nation's oldest and largest subsidized rental options. Created by the 1937 Housing Act, public housing is a hallmark of the New Deal. Public housing is owned and operated by public housing authorities (PHAs). PHAs are operated and governed by locally-appointed or elected Boards of Commissioners. There are over 14,000 public housing developments operated by 3,050 PHAs containing more than 1.2 million units. Public housing is home to several million residents. Over 40 percent of PHA housing units have children present. Approximately 19 percent of PHA residents are elderly. More than half of PHA households are headed by racial and ethnic minorities and nearly 40 percent of PHA occupied households are headed by women (NLIHC, 2007).

Like many other federal housing assistance programs, residents of public housing pay the highest of: (1) 30 percent of their monthly adjusted income; (2) 10 percent of their monthly gross income; (3) their welfare shelter allowance; or (4) a PHA-established minimum rent of up to \$50 (NLIHC, 2007).

Eligibility. Public housing is open to low-income households or those who make less than 80 percent of the area median income.

Admissions for Applicants with Criminal Backgrounds. PHAs must permanently deny admission to lifetime registered sex offenders and persons convicted of producing methamphetamine at federally assisted housing, 24 C.F.R. § 960.204. There is a 3-year ban on admissions for applicants with a prior eviction from federally-assisted housing for drug related activity, 24 C.F.R. § 960.204. PHAs have the discretion to admit applicants with a history of violent, drug, or other crimes that would threaten the health, safety or peaceful enjoyment of residents, 42 U.S.C.A. § 1366. PHAs must deny admission to current users of illegal substances, 24 C.F.R. § 960.204 (Bishop, 2007).

Associated Issues. The demand for public housing far exceeds the supply. In many large cities, where affordable housing needs are most severe, waiting list times can be up to 10 years (Bishop, 2007).

Programmatic Issues: As stated earlier, the waiting list for this type of housing assistance is long and exceeds the supply in most communities.

Eligibility Issues: Reentering Offenders with a history of criminal sexual conduct are not eligible. If an applicant meets income requirements and is not prohibited from using this service by prior convictions, the applicant is likely to be on a waiting list for an extended period of time.

Ability to Contribute: Reentering Offenders must get on a waiting list, maintain contact with the public housing authority until a unit becomes available, meet the income requirement when the unit is available, and show the ability make the required payments at that time.

Conclusion: This housing approach is not likely to be helpful immediately after release from prison, but may be helpful after the returning citizen has established him or herself in the community and financially.

Additional Information. For additional information on HUD's Public Housing Program contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street S.W., Washington, DC 20410, Telephone: (202) 708-1112 TTY: (202) 708-1455, or <http://www.hud.gov/renting/phprog.cfm>.

HUD PROJECT BASED RENTAL ASSISTANCE

Overview. HUD's Project-Based Rental Assistance -- often referred to as Project Based Section 8 -- program provides for privately-owned multifamily housing for low- income households through a federal subsidy of the mortgage, rental assistance or a combination of the two. Over 1 million households live in homes with project-based assistance; two-thirds of these include elderly or disabled family members. Residents residing project based units pay 30 percent of their adjusted income in rent and the rental assistance from HUD pays the remainder of the unit rent (NLIHC, 2008).

Eligibility. Residents in units receiving project-based Section 8 assistance must have low incomes (less than 80 percent of area median income). Forty percent of new admissions are required to have very low incomes (at or below 30 percent of AMI) (NLIHC, 2008).

Admissions for Applicants with Criminal Backgrounds. PHAs must permanently deny admission to lifetime registered sex offenders and persons convicted of producing methamphetamine at federally assisted housing, 24 C.F.R. § 882.518. There is a 3-year ban on admissions for applicants with a prior eviction from federally-assisted housing for drug related activity, 24 C.F.R. § 882.518. PHAs have the discretion to admit applicants with a history of violent, drug, or other crimes that would threaten the health, safety or peaceful enjoyment of residents, 24 C.F.R. § 882.518. PHAs must deny admission to current users of illegal substances, 24 C.F.R. § 882.518 (Bishop, 2007). **Programmatic Issues:** As stated earlier, the waiting list for this type of housing assistance is long and exceeds the supply in most communities.

Eligibility Issues: As stated those with a history of criminal sexual conduct or a specified drug offense are not eligible. If an applicant meets income requirements and is not prohibited from using this service by prior convictions, the applicant is likely to be on a waiting list for an extended period of time.

Ability to Contribute: Reentering Offenders must get on a waiting list, maintain contact with the public housing authority until a unit becomes available, meet the income requirement when the unit is available, and show the ability make the required payments at that time.

Conclusion: This housing approach is not likely to be helpful immediately after release from prison, but may be helpful after the returning citizen has established him or herself in the community and financially

Additional Information. For additional information on HUD's Project Based Rental Assistance contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street S.W., Washington, DC 20410, Telephone: (202) 708-1112 TTY: (202) 708-1455.

HUD HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHERS

Overview. Tenant-based federal rental assistance was established in 1974 during a significant overhaul of federal housing assistance. Currently, about 1.8 million households utilize HUD rental assistance vouchers, often referred to as Section 8 tenant-based assistance. Housing Choice Vouchers allow low-income households to access privately-owned units of their choosing. Within the voucher program, a federal subsidy covers the difference between a tenant's income and the "payment standard," which is the total rent and utility costs that the PHA will cover.

Eligibility. Since 1998, three-quarters of new voucher holders must have extremely low incomes, at or below 30 percent of the area median income (AMI). The remaining 25 percent of new vouchers can be distributed to tenants with incomes up to 80 percent of AMI, but families whose income does not exceed 50 percent are generally favored (NLIHC, 2007).

Admissions for Applicants with Criminal Backgrounds. PHAs must permanently deny voucher to lifetime registered sex offenders and persons convicted of producing methamphetamine at federally assisted housing, 24 C.F.R. § 982.553. There is a 3-year ban on admissions for applicants with a prior eviction from federally-assisted housing for drug related activity, 24 C.F.R. § 982.553. PHAs have the discretion to admit applicants with a history of violent, drug, or other crimes that would threaten the health, safety, or peaceful enjoyment of residents, 24 C.F.R. § 982.553. PHAs must deny vouchers to current users of illegal substances, 24 C.F.R. § 982.553 (Bishop, 2007). Landlords who participate in the voucher program may have their own criteria for selecting tenants, and criminal activity of any household members can present grounds for rejection (Bishop, 2007).

Associated Issues. Vouchers must be utilized for housing that meets HUD housing quality standards and is owned by a landlord willing to enter into a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract with the PHA. The PHA has the authority to modify the payment standard to as low as 90

percent of the Fair Market Rent (FMR) and as high as 110 percent. Within certain limitations, a qualified tenant can rent a unit for any amount of money so long as the PHA finds the rent to be reasonable.

Programmatic Issues: As stated earlier, the waiting list for this type of housing assistance is long and exceeds the supply in most communities.

Eligibility Issues: Reentering Offenders with a history of criminal sexual conduct are not eligible. If an applicant meets income requirements and is not prohibited from using this service by prior convictions, the applicant is likely to be on a waiting list for an extended period of time.

Ability to Contribute: Reentering Offenders must get on a waiting list, maintain contact with the public housing authority until a unit becomes available, meet the income requirement when the unit is available, and show the ability make the required payments at that time.

Conclusion: This housing approach is not likely to be helpful immediately after release from prison, but may be helpful after the returning citizen has established him or herself in the community and financially

Additional Information. For additional information on HUD's Housing Choice Vouchers contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street S.W., Washington, DC 20410, Telephone: (202) 708-1112 TTY: (202) 708-1455, or <http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/homeownership/>

LOW INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDIT (LIHTC)

The LIHTC program, adopted by Congress in the 1986 Tax Reform Act, provides for a reduction in the dollar amount of federal taxes owed by an individual or corporation, in exchange for its investment in low-income rental housing. The amount of tax reduction is tied directly to the proportion of low-income persons among the residents of the housing produced. As of 2004, there were approximately 25,000 LIHTC properties located across the United States and Puerto Rico which have approximately 1.4 million units of housing. LIHTC tenants pay a fixed maximum tax credit rent based on 50 percent or 60 percent of the area median income.

Eligibility. Tax Credit units are available to households at or below 50 percent or 60 percent of the area median income. Approximately 90 percent of these LIHTC units are occupied by low-income households (Bishop, 2007).

Admissions for Applicants with Criminal Backgrounds. There are no federal rules regarding admission of applicants with criminal backgrounds for Low Income Tax Credit housing (Bishop, 2007).

Associated Issues. LIHTC credits are often combined with funding from other federal and state programs. HUD HOME, Community Development Block Grant, Section 8 project based; and USDA Section 515 are often used in conjunction with tax credits.

Programmatic Issues: Reentering offenders may qualify for this type of housing assistance. The determining factors are controlled by the housing provider policies and practices.

Eligibility Issues: If the reentering offender meets the local housing provider criteria including income, this may be a viable housing option.

Ability to Contribute: Reentering offenders will need to be able to contribute to rent. The amount of that contribution is determined on the basis of income thresholds and demographics of current residents in the housing units managed by the provider.

Conclusion: This housing approach may be available shortly after release from prison or any time thereafter. It is also a viable option for individuals without families or families dependent upon the management practices of the provider.

Additional Information. For additional information on the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street S.W., Washington, DC 20410, Telephone: (202) 708-1112 TTY: (202) 708-1455, or <http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/lihtcmou.cfm>

HUD SECTION 202 ELDERLY HOUSING

HUD's Section 202 program provides capital and operating funds to nonprofit organizations that develop and operate senior housing. Section 202 has two components. The first provides capital advances to nonprofit organizations for the construction, rehabilitation or acquisition of supportive housing for seniors. Additionally Section 202 provides rental assistance in the form of Project Rental Assistance Contracts (PRACs) to subsidize the operating expenses of the developments (NLIHC, 2007). The average Section 202 resident is 79 years old, and nearly 39 percent of this program's residents are over the age of 80. The average annual income of a resident is little more than \$10,000.

Eligibility. Residents of Section 202 housing must generally be at least 62 years old and be very low income.

Admissions for Applicants with Criminal Backgrounds. Owners must permanently deny admission to lifetime registered sex offenders, 24 C.F.R. § 5.856. Owners have discretion to admit persons convicted of producing methamphetamine at federally assisted housing, 24 C.F.R. § 5.855. There is a 3-year ban on admissions for applicants with a prior eviction from federally-assisted housing for drug related activity, 24 C.F.R. § 5.855. Owners have the discretion to admit applicants

with a history of violent, drug, or other crimes that would threaten the health, safety, or peaceful enjoyment of residents, 24 C.F.R. § 5.855. Owners must deny admission to current users of illegal substances, 24 C.F.R. § 5.854 (Bishop, 2007).

Additional Information. For additional information on HUD's Section 202 Program contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street S.W., Washington, DC 20410, Telephone: (202) 708-1112 TTY: (202) 708-1455, or <http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/mfh/progdesc/eld202.cfm>

HUD SECTION 811 SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Overview. HUD's Section 811 Supportive Housing Program provides housing for persons with serious and long-term disabilities. Section 811 was created through the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990, which separated housing for people with disabilities from the Section 202 program. The intent of the program is to provide housing and community based services and supports to help those with physical or developmental disabilities live as independently as possible. Additionally, Section 811 provides for project based rental assistance to cover the difference between the HUD-approved operating cost per unit and 30 percent of a resident's adjusted income (Bishop, 2007).

Eligibility. Participants must have a disability, such as a physical or developmental disability or chronic mental illness. Additionally, tenants must be at least 18 years of age and have very low incomes at or below 50 percent of area median income.

Admissions for Applicants with Criminal Backgrounds. Owners must permanently deny admission to lifetime registered sex offenders, 24 C.F.R. § 5.856. Owners have discretion to admit persons convicted of producing methamphetamine at federally assisted housing, 24 C.F.R. § 5.855. There is a 3-year ban on admissions for applicants with a prior eviction from federally-assisted housing for drug related activity, 24 C.F.R. § 5.855. Owners have the discretion to admit applicants with a history of violent, drug, or other crimes that would threaten the health, safety, or peaceful enjoyment of residents, 24 C.F.R. § 5.855. Owners must deny admission to current users of illegal substances, 24 C.F.R. § 5.854 (Bishop, 2007).

Conclusion. Most reentering offenders will not be eligible for this service because they do not meet criteria. For those who do meet all eligibility criteria (income, disability, age, and offense types) this type of housing is not likely to be available immediately post release, but may be a long term housing option after establishing eligibility and waiting a suitable amount of time for an opening to become available.

Additional Information. For additional information on HUD's Section 811 Program contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street S.W., Washington, DC 20410, Telephone: (202) 708-1112 TTY: (202) 708-1455, or <http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/mfh/progdesc/disab811.cfm>

HUD EMERGENCY SHELTER GRANT PROGRAM

Overview. The Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) program provides homeless persons with basic shelter and essential supportive services. It assists with the operational costs of the shelter facility. ESG also provides short-term homeless prevention assistance to persons at imminent risk of losing their own housing due to eviction, foreclosure, or utility shutoffs (HUD, 2008).

Grantees are generally state governments, large cities, urban counties, and U.S. territories, which then make these funds available to eligible recipients, which are local government agencies or private nonprofit organizations (HUD, 2008).

Admissions for Applicants with Criminal Backgrounds. There are no federal rules regarding recipients with criminal backgrounds for this program (Bishop, 2007).

Programmatic Issues: These services are typically for those who are homeless on the street.

Eligibility Issues: While there are no federal restrictions about eligibility, local practices may differ. For example, emergency shelters oriented to family services will prohibit those with histories of criminal sexual conduct and violence from residing in the emergency shelter.

Ability to Contribute: Typically, participants are required to involve themselves in activities to obtain other forms of housing and exit the emergency shelter after an appropriate length of time.

Conclusion: Some reentering offenders will be eligible for these services if they are at risk for homelessness. This is a temporary, short-term housing solution.

Additional Information. For additional information on the Emergency Shelter program contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street S.W., Washington, DC 20410, Telephone: (202) 708-1112 TTY: (202) 708-1455, or <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/programs/esg/>

HUD SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROGRAM

Overview. The Supportive Housing Program funds the development of supportive housing and services that will allow homeless persons to live as independently as possible. Eligible applicants are states, units of local government, other governmental entities such as PHAs, and private nonprofits.

The Supportive Housing Program is authorized by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, as amended. It is designed to promote, as part of a local Continuum of Care strategy, the development of supportive housing and supportive services to assist homeless persons in the transition from homelessness and to enable them to live as independently as possible. Despite the challenges of using federal resources, many rural communities depend on federal programs created by the McKinney-Vento Act, specifically HUD's Continuum of Care programs. The Continuum of Care model requires local nonprofits and government agencies that use McKinney-Vento programs to collaboratively provide services to address homelessness. This system makes it possible for individuals who are experiencing homelessness to seamlessly access programs offered by different organizations.

Supportive Housing Program resources are provided to help homeless persons meet three overall goals: 1) achieve residential stability, 2) increase their skill levels and/or incomes, and 3) obtain greater self-determination (i.e., more influence over decisions that affect their lives).

Admissions for Applicants with Criminal Backgrounds. There are no federal rules regarding admissions with criminal backgrounds for Supportive Housing (Bishop, 2007).

Programmatic Issues: For some offenders, this housing option is useful. If the supportive housing service provider makes provisions for those who are reentering the community and would otherwise be homeless, this supportive housing program is a viable option. It is likely the provider will have a waiting list.

Eligibility Issues: While there are no federal restrictions about eligibility, local practices may differ. For example, a housing provider may elect to prohibit those convicted of criminal sexual conduct or violence from using these services.

Ability to Contribute: Participants will be required to make a contribution to the rent and cooperate with the case management services required by the provider.

Conclusion: This type of service is useful for those who meet local eligibility requirements. There is likely to be a waiting list. However those who have a temporary housing option may enter this type of housing service for extended stays when an opening becomes available.

Additional Information. For additional information on the Supportive Housing program contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street S.W., Washington, DC 20410, Telephone: (202) 708-1112 TTY: (202) 708-1455, or <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/programs/shp/>

SHELTER PLUS CARE PROGRAM

Overview. HUD's Shelter Plus Care Program provides rental assistance for hard-to-serve homeless persons with disabilities in connection with supportive services funded from outside sources. Shelter Plus Care is designed to provide housing and supportive services on a long-term basis for homeless persons with disabilities, (primarily those with serious mental illness, chronic problems with alcohol and/or drugs, and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) or related diseases) and their families who are living in places not intended for human habitation (e.g., streets) or in emergency shelters. The program allows for a variety of housing choices, and a range of supportive services funded by other sources, in response to the needs of the hard-to-reach homeless population with disabilities (HUD, 2008).

Admissions for Applicants with Criminal Backgrounds. There are no federal rules regarding admissions with criminal backgrounds for Shelter Plus Care (Bishop, 2007). **Programmatic Issues:** For some offenders, this housing option is useful. If the supportive housing service provider makes provisions for those who are reentering the community and would otherwise be homeless, this supportive housing program is a viable option. It is likely the provider will have a waiting list.

Eligibility Issues: While there are no federal restrictions about eligibility, local practices may differ. For example, a housing provider may elect to prohibit those convicted of criminal sexual conduct or violence from using these services.

Ability to Contribute: Participants will be required to make a contribution to the rent and cooperate with the case management services required by the provider.

Conclusion: This type of service is useful for those who meet local eligibility requirements. There is likely to be a waiting list. However those who have a temporary housing option may enter this type of housing service for extended stays when an opening becomes available.

Additional Information. For additional information on the Supportive Housing program contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street S.W., Washington, DC 20410, Telephone: (202) 708-1112 TTY: (202) 708-1455, or <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/programs/splusc/>

HUD SECTION 8 SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY MODERATE REHAB

Overview. The Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Program provides rental assistance for homeless persons in connection with the moderate rehabilitation of SRO dwellings. SRO housing contains units for occupancy by one person. These units often contain food preparation or sanitary facilities, or both (HUD, 2008).

Under the program parameters, HUD enters into Annual Contributions Contracts with public housing agencies (PHAs) in connection with the moderate rehabilitation of residential properties

that, when rehabilitation is completed, will contain multiple single room dwelling units. These PHAs make Section 8 rental assistance payments to landlords on behalf of homeless individuals who rent the rehabilitated dwellings. The rental assistance payments cover the difference between a portion of the tenant's income -- typically 30 percent -- and the unit's rent, which must be within the Fair Market Rents established by HUD (HUD, 2008).

Eligibility.

Admissions for Applicants with Criminal Backgrounds. There are no federal rules regarding admissions with criminal backgrounds for SROs (Bishop, 2007).

Additional Information. For additional information on the Single Room Occupancy program contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street S.W., Washington, DC 20410, Telephone: (202) 708-1112 TTY: (202) 708-1455, or <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/programs/sro/>

EMERGENCY FOOD AND SHELTER PROGRAM

Overview. The Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program (EFSP) is a Federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and has been entrusted through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (PL 100-77) "to supplement and expand ongoing efforts to provide shelter, food and supportive services" for the nation's hungry, homeless, and people in economic crisis (FEMA, 2006).

Funded agencies, known as "Local Recipient Organizations", use EFSP supplemental funds for mass shelter, mass feeding, food distribution through food pantries and food banks, one-month utility payments to prevent service cut-off, and one-month rent/mortgage assistance to prevent evictions or assist people leaving shelters to establish stable living conditions. In each of the last few years, nearly 12,000 local nonprofit and government agencies have received EFSP funds in more than 2,500 jurisdictions nationwide (FEMA, 2006).

Eligibility.

Admissions for Applicants with Criminal Backgrounds. There are no federal rules regarding recipients with criminal backgrounds for this program (Bishop, 2007).

Additional Information. For additional information on FEMA's Emergency Food and Shelter Program contact FEMA 500 C Street SW, Washington, D.C. 20472 Disaster Assistance: (800) 621-FEMA, TTY (800) 462-7585. U.S. Department of Homeland Security or <http://www.fema.gov/news/newsrelease.fema?id=32131>.

OTHER FEDERAL HOMELESS HOUSING PROGRAMS

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- Health Center Grants for Homeless Populations
- Community Mental Health Services Block Grant Program
- Transitional Living Program for Older Homeless Youth
- Projects in Transition from Homelessness

ⁱ Portions of Appendix B are excerpted or heavily drawn from the Family Justices publication, *Enhancing Reentry Outcomes Through Housing Partnerships: A Handbook for Community Correction Agencies in Rural Communities*. New York, 2009; and the National Housing Law Project's report, *An Affordable Home on Reentry: Federally Assistance Housing and Previously Incarcerated Individuals*. Oakland, 2008.