

Link to the presentation: <https://vimeo.com/airclientvideos/review/528861702/e4b2e4e078>

I'm Ryan from CSH and I've been at CSH for about 14 years, and we have been working on justice... I first came to CSH to work on justice housing issues so it is my primary love in the work that I do. I started working on a project at Women's Prison Association and something clicked for me and I realized, "Oh my gosh, why have I not been doing housing work all my life?"

**(Opening Slide – CSH/Justice) (0:26)**

So, it turns out I'm a houser. Who knew? I studied Education in Spanish, so it wasn't a direct line. So at CSH, our clearing call is just making sure that people, and particularly those with the greatest needs in the community, have access to housing and the services they need to do well in the community. And we think about making sure that doing well is real and that people are thriving, not just subsisting. We think about making sure that when we think about all people, that all is real and that we are paying attention to race, we are paying attention to gender, we are paying attention to community disparity.

**(Slide 1 – Our Clarion Call: is making sure that all people, particularly those with the greatest needs, have a home in the community and the support they need to thrive.) (1:01)**

Then we think about data because we can have lots of great ideas and if they are not underpinned by data, and I use a big, broad lens for data, which can include people's perspectives and voice on their experience, but also good, solid, nuts and bolts of 'Is our program, getting the results that we said it would get?' and if we don't know that, then how do we really know that we're achieving our goals? So those are the drivers that we think about as we do our work.

**(Slide 2 – Real people, real solutions: Image and a YouTube link for "Barry Story, Supportive Housing Tenant" with the url: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1r4H8ZxzGQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1r4H8ZxzGQ)) (1:25)**

So, we're going to start off, this is, we're not going to talk about, this is a man I know named Barry, and we're not going to spend a lot of time talking about Barry now, but I want to give you a vision of Barry when I first met him. So when I first met Barry, he had a rap sheet about as long as your arm. He had been in and out of Rikers more times in New York city than anybody could count. He had serious mental health issues, addiction issues, a history of cognitive disorder, he had had some head trauma, a long history of just traumatic behavior and issues to deal with, so traumatic exposure. He was a mess. He didn't have any real assets or belongings. He was living on the street, bouncing in and out of shelter. He smelled bad, in the way that you do when you have no access to clean facilities for weeks or months on end. He was alone, confused. So that's kind of how I first met Barry when a team that was outreaching and looking at a housing program that was atypical at the time and still is, to be honest.

**(Slide 3 – Frequent Users: What does a frequent user look like? This shows a bar graph looking at a 2 year period in an individual's life depicting the number of days they spent in a shelter shown on this in blue, the number of days spent in jail which are represented by purple, and days they that were "unknown" for location are in gray) (2:28)**

Barry's what we often refer to at CSH as a person who's a frequent user or high utilizer of systems, so that means that he was a person who was bouncing around between. This is another pattern, but this is a two year history of someone's life. And all the times in purple are days that they

spend in jail. All of the times in blue are days that they spend in the shelter system. And the time, those few brief bars of gray in between, are we don't know where they were.

So they might've been in detox. They could have been in the hospital. They may have been couch surfing. They may have been just sleeping under a bridge. What you don't see on this pattern is any type of stable housing and living condition and this is sadly the case for many of the people that we work with. There is no community asset which they can go back to. There is no family tie, which they can draw on at this point to be able to make up those gaps. And their conditions, the issues that they have, are not being dealt with effectively or being supported, and so they are just in a continual struggle strike of crisis.

**(Slide 4 – Housing needs are not one size fits all: Low need, Moderate Need, and High Need) (3:34)**

So, when I think about housing need and the work that you're all going to be doing, you're going to be working with communities that have a broad spectrum of need. There are many, many people running through jails and prisons, coming back out to the community. And you're going to see people that have what I would just think of at a real high level is low, medium and high needs. So Barry is an example of somebody in that very high need trench. And we estimate at CSH that that's about 20% of the jail population, about 10 to 15% of the prison population and about 20% of the juvenile justice population. The moderate... And those people need pretty deep resources, and it's going to take a long time to help them get out of the situation they're in. It took them a long time to get there, as a friend of mine says. So, we got to be looking at strong sustained resources development.

For moderate need, there you might be talking about people that have a history of employment. They might have addiction issues, they might have some minor mental health or something like that, physical accessibility issues, they may have repeat incarceration issues, limited educational achievement, but probably some. They might need something that's a more moderate support, something to help them access housing, something to help them access the job market, reunify with family, whatever it might be. And then you have people with low need, and that might be people that are either going home to family and actually have a place to discharge to and so really the need is just getting there. And it might be people that need some limited supports, but they probably can get back up on their feet pretty quickly and reenter. And there are a lot of those people.

So, what you don't want to do is use a high need intervention for the person that can get back on their feet with a low piece. One, it might not be successful because it might be more intervention than they need, and Two, because then you're going to miss Barry and you don't want to do that either. So one thing I will say here is that just because somebody has low need, if you don't have a place to go, having low need does not mean that it's not a crisis. So you don't have somewhere to go home, it's a problem that you need help with right away. So it's easy to talk about differentiation and then sometimes miss the fact that crisis is real, even for somebody who may not have these long sustained needs.

**(Slide 5 – 1,125,000: Individuals and families in the United States have needs consistent with supportive housing) (5:44)**

So, we did a national assessment and we found that about 1.25, 1.2 or so, million people in the United States need supportive housing or something like it. They have that need. That's a massive number. If you worked in supportive housing, I know most of you don't, or homelessness, you'd realize that that's just a huge, huge number to deal with. And actually the portion of it that is represented by people that are currently in the homeless system is just a slice of that. So we're looking at a much

broader look. This is what it looks like for justice. So if we're thinking about justice supportive housing need this, and you can access all this stuff on our website if you go to [csh.org/data](http://csh.org/data), you can print out these state maps for your communities, you can sort them in different ways, you can look at justice involved youth, you can look at different categories and help your people walk through that data when you're working with them.

**(Slide 6 – Justice Supportive Housing Needs: State graph looking at the number of Supportive Housing Needs across each state) (6:33)**

But what we see is about a quarter of that overall need is related to the justice system. At least. So I think we're actually a little bit conservative in that estimate. Now, just a poll of hands, how many people think that we spend a quarter of our housing resources working to address the needs of people with criminal justice issues?

[Question from the audience: "A quarter?"]

Ryan continues.

I haven't seen one hand. That was a bold effort to go against the grain, but they're all right. No, [laughing from the audience] we do not spend a quarter of our housing resources. We spend a significant amount of housing resources trying to keep people out of housing with justice backgrounds. It is counter-intuitive, it is bad policy, and it is deeply ingrained in what we do as a culture. So when we think about this broader need, and again, this is the deep need trench, this isn't just, "I have an affordability issue that I got to deal with." This isn't just, "I can't find an apartment. I need to reconnect with some people so I can get on my feet." This is just the deep need trench.

So when you think about that, we realize that we're going to need a lot of strategies and a comprehensive way of looking at this and it's going to range everywhere from looking at things like eligibility barriers in public housing, to looking at affordability and how do we market units, to educating landlords around criminal justice and what are real versus perceived threats, to helping people understand that people who have had a justice involvement actually can and are probably living in your buildings, are probably living as your neighbors, and actually are probably great tenants and neighbors, and they have a lot to bring to the table.

**(Slide 7 – FUSE Supportive Housing is cost-effective solution, producing lasting results: It facilitates cooperation, coordination, partnerships to connect public service systems.) (8:10)**

All right so the initiative I'm going to dig into a little bit is one that we call Fuse. And this is the one that Barry found himself in. So again, targeting that deep need. And this is where we kind of specialize in supportive housing, but it's really the alignment of housing and services. So supportive housing is really affordable housing. So most affordable housing, you read the ads in the paper and it's like, "Oh, this is good for somebody between 35,000 and 45,000." Supportive housing is good if you have no money, so you can get into supportive housing. And it's really intended for people that have very, very little money and really need access to deep rental support or a deeply subsidized unit.

It also comes with services and the fun thing about services in supportive housing is that instead of saying, "Hey, here's what we're going to do for you that's going to make you better." We say, "Here are services that we have, what do you need? How do you... What are your goals? What do you want to

achieve? How do you make this happen for yourself? How can we support you in that effort?" That's what supportive housing does.

**(Slide 8 – Successes: FUSE Evaluations Demonstrate the Impact of Supportive Housing) (9:13)**

What do we see? So when we first started engaging with Barry and with that program in New York, which was called FUSE 15 or so years ago, we went to a lot of our great partners and people literally laughed at us, kicked us out of the room, said, "You can't do this. It's a bad idea. These people..." one of those, "these people" conversations, "...these people don't deserve housing. These people can't live in housing..." I don't know where else are you supposed to live. "...these people can't maintain, you're going to embarrass, we're going to waste resources..." And people just turned us down left and right. Didn't want to be a part of the program. Some brave people did. And that's always what you're looking for in your work, who are these early adopters, the people that get it, that want to try and make that, and focus and cultivate there.

And what we find is that when you, in fact, upend your system and you create housing and you actually create it for the people with the deepest needs, with the types of supports that they need, that in fact, they do great. They maintain their housing as well as the people with these moderate and the light needs do. We see reductions in jail, reductions in homelessness. We see improvements in health. We see reductions of crisis service utilization. So it makes sense. It helps our systems, it relieves pressure. It takes people out of the justice system that do not belong there and which police do not want to interact with. Judges do not want to see them every three weeks. So, it actually does a huge service at the same time.

**(Slide 9 – So what is FUSE? FUSE (Frequent Users Systems Engagement) is more than just housing, it a nationally proven solution. FUSE helps communities maximize data to stabilize homeless frequent users of criminal justice and health services, reducing returns to jail and costly emergency health care.) (10:33)**

So, what started this one program in New York is actually becoming a national model and it has a number of evidence-based evaluations around it, random control trials are starting to pop up. We've seen quasi-experiments, really good solid rigor. Supportive housing is an intervention that is evidence-based in two ways under the SAMHSA piece of one specific model and as a general approach. It is also one of a number of housing interventions and approaches that can be used. And we're not going to dig into those today because there's no way I could give you enough information to be able to take out and be competent to talk about it.

**(Slide 10 – Smaller Safer Fairer: The Jail Population in NYC – Under 6,000 in 2020; 3,300 by 2026) (11:12)**

But I will say this, as we look at, and this is a clipping just from about a week ago, this was from the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice in New York. And this is a track of the census of Rikers, their jail and what's happened over the last couple of years and where they're projecting it to be by 2026. There may still be some wishful thinking in there. This is note, it's not a straight line. Notice there are ups and downs here. And I will say that the reason why this progress is being made is not because of the great leadership at the city, it's because of the great leadership of the community that is holding them to account. So there's some good leadership in the city, too. I don't mean to give them a hard time, but that's what I would think about when you look at your coalitions. That's where the power to do this kind of stuff lives. So as we go down in census, and we get down and we shrink, and you do bail reform, and

you change these patterns of behavior, and you look at different ways of speeding trial, and we get rid of the low hanging fruit in the justice intervention, who is left?

And so my prediction is that before we get to this 3,300, we are going to be in a system where the majority of people that are still on Rikers Island in New York and in other communities, as they are engaging in this type of work, are going to be people with serious mental health, significant disabilities, long histories of instability and homelessness, and that hard, hard piece of the work is we are not figured out how to do. And that's where housing is going to be critical in what you are trying to do. And you're going to have to use a lot of different things, and we're going to help get you some information through this exercise and through this work and these partners. And then I will do one more slide.

**(Slide 11 - Real people, real solutions: Image and a YouTube link for "Barry Story, Supportive Housing Tenant" with the url: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1r4H8ZxzGQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1r4H8ZxzGQ)) (12:43)**

All right. So we're back to Barry. So you've got this picture of Barry in your head 15 years ago, and I'm going to tell you about Barry about nine months ago. And Barry nine months ago was a person who is living in supportive housing that entire time. He's lived stably. He's occasionally had issues, they continue to deal with relapse around drugs and alcohol. However, he has a community of friends, he is not isolated, and so when those issues happen, he can get the help that he needs and he can make the changes that he needs to stay stable. Barry, it turns out, has this incredible poetic soul. When he had no outlets, he was an artist at heart, when he had no outlets, he would take little pieces of chalk like you find in a classroom, and he would carve them with a needle and he would make artwork, sculptures out of them.

He had his art actually featured in an exhibit at the American Folk Museum. He writes poetry. He actually died about six months ago, but when he died six months ago, he died at a funeral, he had a funeral that was attended by friends, a community that saw his value. He volunteered. That's Barry, 15 years later when we first met him. Now think about that transformation. And the thing going to leave you with to just do a little twist here, is that Barry did not change. The poetic soul, the decency, was the same person 15 years ago as he was on the last day. What changed was the system and that is your challenge and that is your goal. And that is why we need to go out into your communities, you need to bring your housing players to the table and you need to hold them to account.

You need to say, "Hey, how come the housing authority is not here at this table? Hey, how come community development is not a part of this coalition? Why aren't we talking to the housing finance agency at the stake to make sure that they are setting aside resources for this group? How do we bring landlords to the table to be a part of the solution and not just screening out what they perceive as a problem?" And there is strong messaging you can use. The people that you are bringing to them are assets, not detrimental. You can create a better, stronger, healthier community that helps families, helps individuals, and there's a lot of work that can be done. So don't be disheartened, because I know that's always the reaction when the groups that you're working with say, "Oh yeah. And housing, by the way." And you say like, "Pooof! I don't know. I don't know where to start?"

The point is, start. Thank you very much.

**Closing Slide:**

Thank you

Ryan.moser@csh.org