

The Role of Housing Supports in Reentry
Webinar Transcript
April 27, 2021

[Slide title — The Role of Housing Supports in Reentry]

Sarah Wurzburg: Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us to discuss the role of housing supports in reentry. This work is supported by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs.

[Slide title — Reentry Week | April 26-30, 2021]

This is part of the Reentry Week series. Today we're discussing housing and behavioral health issues. During Reentry Week, the National Reentry Resource Center will be your one-stop shop for resources and virtual events. You can also follow this through the hashtags #reentrymatters, #reentryweek, and #reentryweek21 to find more information through social media platforms.

[Slide title — Speakers]

We have an awesome group today to tell you a little bit more about how housing fits into reentry processes. First, we have Amanda Clark, who's the housing coordinator and team lead for the Council for the Homeless, Housing Solutions Center in Vancouver, Washington. We also have Deputy Jay Costello, who oversees reentry at Clark County Sheriff's Office in Washington; we have Charles Francis, who's a project manager for behavioral health at the Council of State Governments Justice Center; and Anna Lookingbill, who's the jail discharge planner for the reentry program in Clark County Sheriff's Office in Washington. I am Sarah Wurzburg. I'm a program director for behavioral health at the Council of State Governments Justice Center.

[Slide title — The Council of State Governments Justice Center]

The Council of State Governments is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization. We work to develop research-driven strategies to increase public safety and strengthen communities. We are lucky enough to be able to support Second Chance Act grant programs on topics related to behavioral health, housing, and family supports.

[Slide title — Agenda]

Today, we're going to give a broader overview on the role of housing supports in reentry. Then, we'll hear from one of the current Second Chance Act grantees, fiscal year [20]18 Second Chance Act Reentry Program for Adults with Co-occurring Substance Use and Mental Disorders, from Clark County, Washington. They'll have partners from the sheriff's office, as well as their Council for the Homeless also speaking today, so we're really excited to have that information to share with you.

[Slide title — Overview of the Role of Housing Supports in Reentry]

First, we're going to begin with the overview of the role of housing supports in reentry, and I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, Charles Francis, to speak to that. Take it away, Charley.

[Slide title — Many people exit the justice system into homelessness]

Charley Francis: Thank you so much, Sarah, and great to talk to you all today.

So, as you all know, housing—affordable housing, in particular—is hard to come by for many populations and in most communities across the United States. But people exiting the justice system have a particularly difficult time, and too many are ending up exiting directly into homelessness. Before COVID-19 hit, over 50,000 people a year were entering emergency shelters from either prison or jail each year, and that is why as the number of people experiencing homelessness has fallen, the number of people entering homelessness from corrections institutions has gone up.

So, there's a real mismatch there. And interestingly, many folks are getting released into community supervision as well too, so that definitely adds an extra layer into these different issues.

[Slide title — Housing Instability and Justice Involvement: A Cyclical Relationship]

And the reason for this is housing instability and homelessness and involvement with the justice system can often be a vicious cycle. And there's several reasons for this: law enforcement policies and procedures like ordinances against panhandling, sleeping in the street, can contribute to arrest for behaviors that are associated with basically living your private life outside. And the next point in this cycle, lack of stable housing, can sometimes make you less likely to be diverted from jail or prison.

Further compounding things, when you come out of jail or prison criminal history can be a barrier to securing housing, and I'll go a little bit deeper into that in a second. And finally, lack of housing after exit can increase the chances of community supervision violations and, ultimately, going back to prison or jail.

[Slide title — Many barriers to accessing housing upon reentry]

So, some of these barriers to accessing housing upon reentry are at the state and local level, in particular, as well as the federal. We have what are called collateral consequences, particularly state laws and regulations that restrict access to housing; probably the best known of these are sex offender residency restrictions, but there are many others.

Public housing authorities have wide latitude in terms of criminal history look-back periods—how many years ago they committed a certain either type of offense or any offense that renders you ineligible for housing—and these may be above sort of minimum that HUD requires. And also, in private market housing many people coming back from prison and jail face a lot of stigma, or other resource challenges just being able to find and obtain this housing in the first place.

[Slide title — Housing's role in successful reentry]

But housing is absolutely critical to successful reentry. When you don't have to live your private life outside, you're much less likely to be in contact with law enforcement. When you have stable housing, you're much less likely to return to jail or prison, due to the stability that you

have and the platform you have for pursuing other goals in your life. You have a more general feeling of community stability, and you're able to participate more in community-based services, which could be treatment, employment, or many other of these types of services.

[Slide title — The Housing First approach]

And so, in particular, a very promising and evidence-based model towards connecting people with permanent housing is called Housing First. The core philosophy here is to provide housing without any preconditions—in particular, sobriety or engagement in treatment, but this can also include criminal records, or credit checks, or things of that nature. The idea is that housing is actually a foundation to be able to work on these larger goals.

And so, there are a number of good studies out there showing that Housing First-type models lead to people staying in housing longer, engaging in treatment and services to help their recovery, and ultimately reduce returns to prison in jail.

Now, Housing First is not the only approach out there. Short-term emergency housing is very important; recovery housing is important for people who want to engage in treatment or may have mandated conditions of release; but Housing First really complements these approaches as a way to get people housed permanently.

And finally, it makes economic sense. There is good data out there also showing that getting people into Housing First-type programs reduces costs associated with homelessness, such as jail stays and emergency room stays.

[Slide title — Key housing types for different needs: affordable vs. market rate housing]

And so now I'd like to talk a little bit about when you're connecting people with housing, there are many different types of housing to choose from. When we talk about affordable housing in general, that is any type of housing where the resident's rent is usually set at about 30 percent of income, either because the housing is subsidized or the rent is restricted.

And that encompasses several different types of housing, which can generally be broken down into tenant-based rental assistance, otherwise known as Section 8 vouchers and the most common kind, as well as public housing developments and privately owned subsidized housing developments.

The target population for general affordable housing is people who can't afford housing on private market on their own but may not have a large need for supportive services. And affordable housing is usually mentioned in contrast with market-rate housing, which represents most of the inventory in a given community, and there are no rent subsidies or restrictions.

[Slide title — Key housing types for different needs: housing with supportive services]

Now, there are other types of housing that have supportive services attached. And this typically is the type of housing that utilizes a Housing First approach. A very important type of housing in

reentry is permanent supportive housing (PSH). It's affordable housing, but there are no time limits, and it also provides wrap-around supportive services for the people that are living there.

And the target population for PSH are people that have high housing affordability needs but also complex behavioral health healthcare needs or at higher risk of reoffense, and it's good to target PSH, towards these higher acuity folks, because it tends to be a more limited supply and it's very expensive and resource intensive.

Rapid re-housing is the other major housing model under the Housing First/supportive housing umbrella, and it can be many different things. It's an individualized package of assistance to connect people to housing and to keep them there. And this assistance can include help with security deposits, utility arrearages, a few months of rental assistance, housing stabilization. The key aspect of rapid rehousing is it's based on the person.

And so, the target population is different than people with PSH. People in rapid re-housing may need supportive services for a short period of time to find and stay in housing, but the idea is that they will be able to be self-sufficient after a certain period of time in most cases.

[Slide title — Key housing system partners]

So those are some of the key housing system types. I also want to touch on some of the key partners in your local housing system. Probably the one that you should know first is the Continuum of Care. It's a planning body in a community—and maybe at a city, regional, county or state level—that governs the access to all of the homeless assistance funded by HUD in a community.

And in particular, these are the Housing First-type programs, permanent supportive housing, and rapid re-housing. They help make funding decisions, and they also have what's called a coordinated entry system, where people can go to different intake points throughout the community, including homeless shelters, social service providers, and sometimes prisons and jails, to go into the system and then be prioritized for available housing based on their needs.

Another very important housing partner is a public housing authority, which can be municipal or regional agency, that administers Section 8 vouchers and subsidize developments, including public housing developments.

Now, landlords are an absolutely critical partner. Building partnerships and recruiting landlords is an essential strategy—we could do a whole separate presentation on that topic—but really doing education and building those relationships is essential because Continuum of Care housing, public housing, and other affordable housing [are] very important but it's limited, so connecting with landlords is an essential strategy.

And finally, other partners include state housing agencies, which act a bit like a housing authority on a more macro level and have other rental assistance and supportive housing

programs, and private subsidized developments, which operate basically like mini housing authorities but are privately owned and get assistance from HUD.

[Slide title — Four steps to meeting housing needs: Collaborate]

So, I want to finish off my portion of this presentation with four steps that local partnerships criminal justice leaders can take to meet housing needs. Again, this could be a much longer conversation, but if you're looking for just a few steps of where to start, I'd like to just offer a few words here.

As many of you know, people leaving prison and jail touch multiple agencies, including the homeless assistance system, other housing assistance providers, and healthcare. They tend to be what's known as familiar faces. And the problem is the resources in each of these systems are very limited, so being able to coordinate and maximize these resources is essential to have the most impact.

A couple of ways that you can do that is conducting cross-systems training so that the different systems can understand both the resources that are available and the constraints in each system. For example, we helped conduct a training like this in California last year between the parole districts across the state and Continuums of Care. One of the best things that came out of that training was that every regional parole office knew their Continuum of Care context, and the Continuum of Care got a better idea of the kind of housing programs that parole agencies offered.

It's also good to ensure representation from different systems and planning bodies, like a criminal justice advisory board, ensuring there's housing representation or local interagency council and homelessness, because this helps really advocate for the type of resources that people need in each system because the problems go across systems, and the resources are also across systems.

And it's also important to include, where possible, people with lived experience in these planning bodies to really understand the human side of these perspectives and to address resource and planning concerns that otherwise might be missed.

[Slide title — Four steps to meeting housing needs: Assess]

So, the next of my four steps is assessment, and this one can be a bit of a heavier lift. But a great practice in prisons and jails is to be able to conduct a screening for homelessness or risk of homelessness and a housing needs assessment before release. And this is done to varying degrees and varying facilities. It can be particularly difficult in jails because of a lower level of staffing resources and very short stays.

But their being able to design or adapt screening and assessment tools to do this really helps focus discharge planning on people with the highest risk and help get that planning done sooner to reduce the chance of people falling through the cracks.

One example of where this was done, an SCA grantee, the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections implemented a process for exiting prison. They looked at housing needs as well as criminogenic risk and housing status. They integrated this into their assessment tools to really be able to do comprehensive assessment and prioritize their discharge planning. They also utilized HUD Emergency Solutions grant funding to pay for the case management that will be needed to connect people with housing, and also for homelessness prevention assistance, which is kind of similar to rapid re-housing except on the front-end—things that will keep people ideally from falling into homelessness.

So, to be able to implement these sorts of steps identifying resources for staffing support and TA is absolutely critical. Whether it's via state agencies, social service partnerships, or other means.

[Slide title — Four steps to meeting housing needs: Connect]

The next step is to connect with housing partners. Linkage between the homeless assistance systems, prisons and jails, and community supervision is essential to help get people connected quickly to permanent housing assistance, and again to try to prevent people falling through the cracks on those critical first days of reentry.

The most key action that can be taken is establishing the prison or the jail as an entry point into the Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry system that I mentioned earlier, and this principally involves establishing a formal referral process, as well as data entry into what's called the homeless management information system. But really the foundation of being able to establish those procedures is really getting to know the folks in your local CoC and building those working relationships. CoCs aren't the only housing partners to connect with, but it's a very good place to start.

[Slide title — Four steps to meeting housing needs: Expand]

And finally, expand. It's very important to maximize resources and connect people with the housing that's available, but in most places there just simply isn't enough.

So, a few ideas for how that can be addressed: Maximizing existing resources if there is local surplus state or county land. If the local PHA may have a small number of vouchers to dedicate towards the reentry population, looking at funding outside of the housing system such as funding from the criminal justice system for permanent housing or cost savings through, for example, reduced jail or prison populations.

Leveraging private funding is also essential because government can't do it alone, in particular to increase the availability of rental assistance, and also, to offer one strategy that's been done in a few communities, is to offer incentives to landlords, whether it's small cash incentives or even risk mitigation funds to rent towards people leaving incarceration.

And finally, as you're expanding the housing supply, it's important to keep racial-equity lines, using data to the extent available to look at where's housing being built, and who has access and similar issues.

[Slide title — Clark County, Washington]

Sarah Wurzburg: Thanks so much, Charley, for that great overview. Now I'm excited to be able to turn it over to the team from Clark County, Washington. We have representatives from the sheriff's office and the Council for the Homeless. Take it away, Clark County team.

[Slide title — Clark County, Washington]

Anna Lookingbill: Good afternoon. My name is Anna Lookingbill. I work in Clark County Jail in Vancouver, Washington.

Deputy Jay Costello: Good afternoon, I'm Deputy Jay Costello. I'm a corrections deputy at Clark County Sheriff's Office in Vancouver, Washington.

Amanda Clark: And hi, I'm Amanda Clark, and I am a housing coordinator team lead with Council for the Homeless in Vancouver.

Anna Lookingbill: And we've been asked to share a little bit with you today about how Clark County Jail is coordinating with Council for the Homeless regarding housing assessments and connecting people to services.

[Slide title — Clark County Jail]

Deputy Jay Costello: Our facility is located in Southwest Washington in Vancouver, Washington. The numbers that are presented are from the year 2019 due to the fact that 2020 was kind of a tough year and the numbers really didn't show the accuracy of what we do here. However, in 2019, we had an average daily population of 634 inmates. Length of stay [was] approximately 17 to 18 days, which, in the reentry world means to us, we have to get a hold of these guys that are in desperate need of services throughout the community within that timeframe, so that we could attempt to fulfill their needs before they get released within that short timeframe. We approximately release about 13,000 each year.

Anna Lookingbill: Yep, and we are considered medium-sized jail. Interesting side note about jails: we, of course, have both pre-sentence and fully-sentenced persons; we have men; we have women; we have minimum, medium, and maximum security. All in a correctional facility that was built in 1984 for 300 people, and not with any design or thought toward providing services, which you know in 1984 wasn't a thing like it is now. So, our team has lots of unique logistical challenges to providing services on the ground.

[Slide title — Clark County Jail Reentry Program]

So, the reentry program in the jail was started in 2014. It was actually started by corrections officers in the corrections branch really recognizing that Clark County Sheriff's Office, our

function, of course, is to provide public safety. We have law enforcement; we have “support,” or records; and then we operate a jail.

The function of our organization was to protect and serve our community, and so it was recognized that Clark County Jail could also play a role in that mission, not only by connecting people with resources and services to decrease recidivism, but by also making sure some of the vulnerable folks that come through our jail were connected to places that could not only help them be healthier but potentially keep them alive.

The team that operates here is an interdisciplinary team. We have a sergeant; we have four specialized corrections officers that actually applied for and begged to be on this team; and there’s two civilian personnel—I’m one of them, I’m a social worker—and then we also take interns.

The photos you can see on the screen—we run a whole variety of different services, everything from classes to drug treatment programs. We teach crisis intervention team training, specific to behavioral health crisis and correctional facilities; we do a whole array of services and programs.

We also work with a bucket load of people. In 2019, our team provided over 3,568 hours of direct service to inmates; we saw over 5,481 inmates, sometimes the same inmate more than once, of course, because people come back for services and programs, and then we saw an additional 2,567 in our grant programs. We have a BJA grant for co-occurring disorders; that is a Second Chance Act grant. We are also a partner on a SAMHSA grant for medication-assisted treatment, a couple of local grants for peer mentoring, and a bunch of different things.

My team responded to over 7,000 requests from inmates regarding community resource information: ‘Hey, I’m homeless, where can I live?’ ‘Hey, I’m a victim of domestic violence, how do I get services?’ ‘What about my food stamps?’ and ‘Can I get a sleeping bag, I’m going to be releasing to the street?’ You know, things like that.

We run a large community meeting with over 75 community partners, the idea being we get all our providers in a room and help them talk to each other. We do not staff direct cases, but we talk about broader systems coordination. A lot of our community agencies do serve adult criminal justice-involved persons, but they were pretty siloed; they didn’t necessarily know each other, because they were so busy with the work that they were already doing.

What happens for the folks that we work with here is that inmates usually don’t just need one thing or two things; they need like 15 things. So, we needed our partners to be able to talk to each other to better meet some of these complex needs. We also, like I mentioned, teach that CIT for corrections training. We present all over the place, local groups, state, national, international on our programs and services—we’re really, really busy.

Our corrections officers actually operate the bulk of our reentry program. Deputy Costello is going to talk a little bit about the classes that we offer, and please keep in mind, of course, COVID-19 has made changes to our programs. That's a whole different training, for a different day, of course, but we're doing the best we can, within those limitations.

Deputy Jay Costello: We have a few listed programs that we provide here. Anna has talked about a few of them: the co-occurring mental health and drug treatment program and classes and mentoring, as well as the medication-assisted treatment program. We also offer some job training, and most of the goals for no matter which one of these classes are presented—the main focus is a goal seeking, so that it's expressed to the inmates that there is a focus at the end of this: "When I get out of here, I'll have a goal, I can get out of here and do something a little different than what I've been doing."

We offer a variety of classes, food stamps, we have representatives come in, peer mentoring, recovery support meetings. All of these are conducted inside our facility here. Our community partners come on a scheduled basis and present their information to a selected, qualified group of inmates. And, of course, housing assessments—we primarily use Council for the Homeless, a local agency in our community; however, we do have faith-based mentoring and partnerships, as well as Oxford housing to also assist them in that type of needs.

Anna Lookingbill: Yep. Everything we do in the reentry program is voluntary—our target population are inmates that are either going to release to our local community or they are pre-sentenced but they're likely to release to our local community. That's not because we don't want to serve people that are going to prison or might have holds to other locations; it's simply because our team has limited resources.

When I say voluntary, what I mean is that the court can't order us, a judge can't require us, someone's probation officer can't make somebody do something. The challenge with that is our folks don't receive any benefit to their time of their sentencing, but we're very okay allowing this piece to be independent. There's a lot of things in criminal justice that people don't have choice about or control over.

Our program absolutely allows that—for example, somebody might say, you know I want to talk about my housing, but I'm not ready to address my drug treatment. The reentry team says 'great, how can we help you with that today?' We're really wanting to support people where they're at with the goals that they have.

As you can imagine, in our jail, homelessness is a significant issue.

[No title — Slide showing the process for housing eligibility screening and provision]

Deputy Jay Costello: In 2019, approximately 13,000 persons were booked and processed here into Clark County. Of that number, approximately 25 to 27 percent report homelessness at that processing time. Now keep in mind this number may not be as accurate as it seems due to the fact that the ... individual getting booked in [may] report housing inaccurately, or they may have

trouble with the court systems, or they may give a wrong address or may not have an address, even though they had one, so these numbers may be skewed some, but pretty close, right around 25 to 27 percent.

Now, in a perfect world, reentry program gets request from a wide range of sources to include inmate requests. It's where the individual says, 'hey I need some housing; when I get out of here in 10 days, I have no place to go. Where can I go?' That's where we step in as one portion.

Community partners also refer, family members refer, other inmates refer; even their attorneys refer housing needs for these individuals. So, what we do is we pull a list together, determine if they qualify. If they do qualify, they're screened, and they're eligible, we do a housing assessment and we collect all this paperwork and it's sent forward, and timelines are set up so that a representative from our local Council for the Homeless can interview these individuals and prepare them for the step that's needed once they get released from our facility. Now that's a perfect world; however...

Anna Lookingbill: However, 'jail is not a perfect world,' says everyone who's ever been in, worked in, or gotten near a jail. Some of the challenges that happened to us, we talked about the eligibility screening piece. Council for the Homeless worked with us to keep that as minimal as possible and we're using HUD criteria. So, if a person is incarcerated past 90 days, they are no longer considered homeless per HUD, they are now considered housed. So, when we're looking for eligibility, we're checking the amount of time they've been here.

We're also doing our best to check if they were homeless prior to coming to the jail. Certainly, that's more of an approximation. We might look at an old booking record, we might ask the person, if we can, but really, we let our community partner take the weight on that. The paperwork that Deputy Costello is talking about is a packet of releases of information that was compiled by Council for the Homeless. That way when they perform that assessment on the phone from the jail, Council for the Homeless already has some of the releases and information that they would need to help coordinate care for that person.

So, like we said, there's all kinds of places people fall out of our great plan. Sometimes folks trip on that 90-day incarceration rule. Certainly, in our area, with the impacts of COVID-19, court cases have spread out way further than they ever would; folks are remaining incarcerated longer, not through anything that has to do with them, but simply due to delays in the courts, so that's caused a lot of problems.

When people fall outside of eligibility for Council for the Homeless, we don't want to say 'better luck next time,' we don't want to say 'sorry, we can't do anything for you.' We're going to do everything we can to try to help. Also, note we don't do any kind of screening based on someone's charges for whether or not they can have a housing assessment.

Amanda will talk about there are some charges that do cause more problems with HUD, specifically sex crimes, arson crimes, and things like that. Our unit does not make any

determinations based on those. It's simply 90 days, if possible, [and] do we know if you were homeless or not.

Let's say we've got somebody over 90 days—what happens next? Well, our team is going to do our best to refer to these other housing programs. So, it could be faith-based; it could be Oxford; it could be department of corrections; voucher stuff that they may have access to. It could be a HARPS [Housing and Recovery through Peer Services]; we have a forensic HARPS program in this area.

We're going to try to refer to anything else—like I said, Oxfords are big; we do have some ATR [Access to Recovery] funding of the State of Washington, so our peer mentoring program sometimes leverages that. We're going to try to find other options, if we can. ...

We also have access to something that's traditionally used by law enforcement, but Council for the Homeless was able to make it happen—the jail can access emergency hotel vouchers. We also have a relationship with our local public health department to put someone in a cab, to be able to send them to a safe location. These are used for vulnerable people, so again, think of somebody that's elderly or, you know, medically fragile; they're releasing the middle of the night and it's December; maybe they have a disability. So, making sure that in that immediate emergency situation, we can get them from the jail to a safe location. Again, that's traditionally law enforcement, but the local agency that coordinates that made it possible for our jail to be able to access that as well.

We also work with homeless outreach. Sometimes somebody falls outside that window of eligibility; we can't refer them for housing assessment, but we can absolutely say to our local homeless outreach programs, 'Hey do you know John Smith?' If we can set up a meeting with them, we tried to do that as well: 'Hey this is John Smith, and this is how he can be reached or she can be reached. This is the kind of support they're looking for.'

So even if they can't have the housing assessment, someone on one of our outreach teams is aware of them, ideally has talked to them, and has a plan to service-engage them.

We also are very fortunate ... we've been able to work again with Council for the Homeless and funnel some local donations: one grant from a nonprofit community funding group, another grant from a local church group to actually purchase tangible items for people releasing to the street.

One thing to keep in mind about jail: we don't get to say, 'you know, sorry, we're not going to release you until Tuesday when it's 70 degrees outside and it's daytime and it's sunny.' Jails don't have that option. We release on Christmas Day, we release in the middle of the night, we release when it's freezing, we release 24/7 all year round.

So, our team was able to, through Council for the Homeless, purchase some tangible items, so that if we are releasing someone to the street and it's winter, they could at least be warm. Our

community partners are incredible, but they don't necessarily work at three o'clock in the morning, and we do. ...

[Slide title — Council for the Homeless]

Amanda Clark: Hi. I said earlier, my name is Amanda and I am a housing coordinator with Council for the Homeless, and just as a quick introduction, Council for the Homeless is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide community leadership, compelling advocacy, and practical solutions to prevent and end homelessness in Clark County, Washington.

We are the agency designated by our local CoC to serve as a Coordinated Entry access point for the majority of homeless assistance programs in Clark County. The benefit of Coordinated Entry is that it provides clients with a single point of access to multiple agencies that offer shelter and housing assistance program within a given community.

It's more trauma-informed and more efficient than siloed individual entry to a multitude of different agencies. It's much easier for our clients to do this, tell their story one time, and to have us connect them to all the agencies they need to rather than to tell it 20 times and relive that again and again.

To find your local CoC lead agency, you can either check with your state's department of commerce, or you can go to www.hud.gov/findshelter. Not all communities have Coordinated Entry and some have multiple agencies that do Coordinated Entry for their community, so it's just finding what your community does and then connecting with them.

[Slide title — CFTH/Clark County Jail Partnership]

So, our partnership with the Clark County Jail began back in 2016 when our community adopted the Housing First model, and our most chronically homeless clients were identified as also being "frequent fliers" at the jail. And, as Anna mentioned earlier, screening for this is actually pretty simple. Clark County Sheriff's Office reentry team screens people for two criteria: were they experiencing homelessness when they were arrested, and have they been incarcerated for fewer than 90 days.

Screening for housing assessment eligibility does not have to be a complex process. While higher-level crimes, like sex offense charges or arson charges, can be more difficult to overcome, they are not impossible. A variety of funding sources in your community can provide different opportunities, so we don't exclude assessing these individuals, but we're upfront with them about how their charges are going to limit their options.

Our assessments are done primarily over the phone on pre-designated days and times. And, again, as Anna mentioned, if an inmate is found eligible for assessment, they're given an ROI [request of information] packet to complete and sign prior to the designated day and time that week, and then the reentry team sends the packets to our agency after the inmate completes their assessment with us over the phone. Inmates are then given information sheets from

Council for the Homeless regarding program eligibility, either rapid re-housing programs or permanent supportive housing programs, and those are provided to the inmates post-assessment in the jail, with follow-up contact information for Council for the Homeless provided for each client, so that they can connect with us after release.

And then the clients are added to our priority pools, which are essentially vulnerability-based waitlists used to refer clients to housing agencies as openings within their various programs become available. Council for the Homeless works with multiple agencies here in Clark County, and within each of those agencies there's multiple programs that are funded through various sources. So, there's a lot of options, and we are kind of a filtering system for that, so that we can connect the clients to the programs that will best meet their needs.

And just as clarification, we talk about vulnerability, vulnerability literally means how likely someone is to die on the streets.

In 2019, we've assessed about 149 incarcerated clients, 59 percent of those roughly were scored into rapid re-housing programs, and 38 percent scored into permanent supportive housing programs, so it kind of gives you an idea of how those needs and numbers shake out.

Anna Lookingbill: And we just wanted to note that you know folks could access Council for the Homeless for housing assessments in the community. Absolutely, they provide that service but something that inmates here at the jail pointed out to us is that when they get out, they've got a lot going on—everything from supervision to 'Where's my family?' to 'Is my dog okay?' to 'I need to get to drug treatment,' so anything we could do to have a few less requirements. It also guarantees they get connected with Council for the Homeless and program and services.

A lot of these folks were people that just for whatever reason never got on the formal radar because they were never able to participate in the assessment process in the community, so doing it directly from jail helped us target people that, for whatever reason, just were not able to follow through in the world.

Amanda Clark: In addition to that, we are able to come into the jail, in addition to doing the phone assessments, to do more intensive assessments. Housing coordinators that have received jail clearance are able to meet with inmates in the reentry pod to conduct in-person assessments with folks that have been identified as highly vulnerable, often with multiple needs for, and barriers to, housing.

These are folks that just aren't organized enough to even connect with us once they are released from jail, and so it provides an essential contact point for those people in our community that are really most vulnerable and just end up in jail for a variety of reasons.

[Slide title — What makes this partnership work?]

All right, what makes this partnership work? There are a few things and for me I'm just coming in and doing this: buy-in from all partners involved and helps to remove the red tape that

makes the process daunting or complicated. What I love about this team is that everybody is very committed to making this work. When everything started shutting down due to COVID, our assessments with Council for the Homeless for housing were one of the last things to be dropped off of the radar. We tried to keep those going as long as possible, and it was only when the jail had to kind of restructure some stuff, due to COVID, that those finally had to cease for a little bit but that just shows the level of commitment that our reentry team has towards making this work and getting people connected to their services.

Anna Lookingbill: One of the first things brought back.

[Looks back toward Anna]

Amanda Clark: And was it one of the first—?

Anna Lookingbill: Yes.

Amanda Clark: Excellent. One of the first things brought back.

So, prioritizing that process, and doing it not only consistently and regularly, but also having consistent and regular times. We have like two days a week, at a regular time, every week, that we try and do these assessments. Sometimes things happen and we're not able to and that's okay; we know that it can be a chaotic environment, but—

Anna Lookingbill: Lockdown!

[Laughter]

Amanda Clark: But as much as we can, we try to make sure that we are consistent in those days and times and prioritizing that is another that actually makes this work.

And then establishing a consistent method of communication ... Be flexible and find out what works best for you. Is it over the phone, is it in person, training jail staff on doing some of the assessments, or a combination of all of the above. We've tried all of these things, and Clark County has found that doing primarily phone assessments is what works best for us. We tend to be able to serve the maximum amount of people that way, but we're also able to come into the jail, as I mentioned earlier, for those that just isn't a good fit, it doesn't work, they need a more in-person connection to even complete these assessments.

And then building relationships across agencies: get to know your team, be open and willing to find those connection points. As Anna mentioned, the CCSO hosts the quarterly reentry providers meeting that brings all the partners from all over the community together to discuss and share ways to collaborate and serve our justice-involved clients. It's an incredible meeting, and we are able to really work as a team with our other agencies in the community.

Reentry has invited Council for the Homeless to participate in the annual CIT trainings to foster better understanding between two fields with very different approaches and resources, and I think that definitely helps us connect better.

And then reach out and be responsive—for example, I check the local jail roster on a regular basis and alert the reentry team, when someone I'm working with or I've been looking for is in custody, so that they can connect me with them for various things like assessments, signatures on paperwork, etc. And then Anna, in turn, is able to reach out when they have someone in crisis that needs assistance right away, outside of the kind of the normal process of things.

Anna Lookingbill: Yep, I can't tell you how many times I've emailed Council for the Homeless and said, 'Oh my goodness. I might have an emergency in booking—do you have shelter beds for a female?' 'I'm not sure yet, I'll be updating you in 10 minutes,' and they're incredibly responsive. Sometimes we need their support, sometimes we don't, but they're always really amazing about getting back to us. The middle of a crisis is not the time to make a new friend, so I'm always grateful for those relationships ahead of time.

Additionally, we were able to use Council for the Homeless to accept funding on our behalf. So as a government entity, strange things happen when you give us money, so in this particular case, it was easier to funnel some community funding through Council for the Homeless. As a nonprofit organization, they have different purchasing power than we do, so if you flip to the next slide...

[No title — Slide with photos of staff and donated supplies]

...you can see a number of tangible resources that we were able to purchase. You see everything from sleeping bags to backpacks to feminine hygiene supplies. We stock a number of items here.

As I mentioned earlier, people release from the jail 24/7—in the middle of the night, when it's cold, when it's rainy, when it's snowing. You get booked in July in a tank top and you release in December potentially wearing that same tank top. So, how do we keep you warm and alive until you're able to access the service provider?

Additionally, the tangible resources that we have here in Clark County Jail—our reentry officers are not the only officers that can access them; any corrections officer in the facility can come get a sleeping bag and a tarp and give it to someone that's leaving from the jail in the middle of the night. So, a lot of the photos, what you're going to see is you see a mix of civilian and uniform personnel. We recognize that our groups provide different functions, but together we were able to achieve some of these things.

To date, we pulled in over \$9,000 in flexible funding and funneled it through Council for the Homeless to support our inmate populations. Nine thousand dollars doesn't sound like much but for some of the folks releasing it literally might make all the difference.

[Slide title — Success Story]

Amanda Clark: As we know, there's more need than there are services and resources available always. That's always going to be a thing. For example, right now, Clark County has over 900 clients on our permanent supportive housing priority pool, and no current housing program openings which we can refer them, and this is in spite of increasing our permanent supportive housing bed capacity in our community over the past two years with additional sites and buildings specifically tailored towards folks with those needs.

Though those numbers sound daunting, they don't negate or invalidate the successes that have come from this partnership. Without connection to clients throughout community access points like reentry, many of the clients that don't otherwise access services, who only touch the system through contact with law enforcement, would not be on our radar for assistance at all. And, as I mentioned earlier, recognition of this fact and willingness to take action on it is what led us to being able to connect with some of our communities' most vulnerable citizens, who also happen to be justice-involved.

Alex was one of those people. Alex was someone who didn't seek out services on her own despite experiencing homelessness for several years. She struggles with mental health, cognitive, and substance use disorders, and the only system of care that she was in regular contact with was the Clark County Jail. In the five years prior to 2018, Alex had been in jail 12 different times, with 1 prison stay. Council for the Homeless knew her, but she was always impossible to locate when she wasn't in jail, primarily because she was in unsafe situations due to her high level of vulnerability. If it weren't for our partnership with reentry, we would not have been able to connect with her in 2018 when we had a housing opportunity for her. Because of our reentry partnership, when her name came up in the jail roster, we saw that and reached out to reentry about her. We were able to meet with Alex in the jail to update her assessment and paperwork and then refer her to a local permanent supportive housing program called Lincoln Place.

Her housing case managers began working with her while she was still incarcerated, and when she was released from jail this time, she was able to go directly to her own housing. It takes some time to stabilize and make that lifestyle shift, so in the first year of being housed she was arrested three more times, but her last month of incarceration was in 2019, and with help from her case workers and her supported housing, she began to regularly attend her DOC check-ins. And as of January of this year, she's officially off paper.

Anna Lookingbill: That's a big deal.

Amanda Clark: It's a very big deal for her. Not all journeys end like Alex's, but her story shows that success can be, and is, possible, but only if we work together to break down barriers and remove the red tape.

Anna Lookingbill: Clark County Jail is part of the law enforcement organization. Clark County Sheriff's Office is charged with protecting and serving our community. I think what has been

part of the shift that we've seen is 1) viewing Clark County Jail as a critical piece of that public safety system, but 2) really recognizing that we need to not only protect people that are outside in our community, but we need to do everything we can to protect people that perhaps are inside the walls of the jail.

About a month ago, we had a client that we were all working with actually die before she was able to be placed in housing. She died on a park bench in our community, because we were not able to serve her soon enough. She's not the first. She will not be the last. But certainly, it drives home for me the responsibility that I have, as a member of this team, to do everything I can to connect people with services while they're here. Certainly, we're not perfect, we're not meeting all the need, but I'm really proud that Clark County Sheriff's Office, the reentry program, and Clark County Jail, and partners like Council for the Homeless are trying. We're working together, we're coordinating care, and together we're accessing people that are unlikely to have been served through any other way.

So, we thank you for including us today. ...

Sarah Wurzburg: Thank you so much; it was such a great overview. Thank you so much to Amanda Clark from Council for the Homeless in Vancouver, Washington; Deputy Jay Costello and Anna Lookingbill from Clark County Sheriff's Office; as well as Charles Francis from the Council of State Governments Justice Center.

[Slide title — www.NationalReentryResourceCenter.org]

To see Reentry Week's full schedule of events and links and resources, you can visit the National Reentry Resource Center at www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/.

[Slide title — Track News and Updates on Social Media]

Another way to join the conversation is through hashtag #reentrymatters, #reentryweek, and #reentryweek21 on social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

[Slide title — Thank You!]

Sign up for the NRRC's newsletters, and if you have questions, please feel free to reach out to the NRRC via email.

I want to thank again Clark County, Washington for participating in the webinar, as well as Charley Francis. I hope everyone has a great afternoon.

Jennifer Loeffler-Cobia: Thank you so much, Sarah and team, for that wonderful presentation. I will invite our panelists to join me here on video and they will continue to respond to questions that you have. I also want to remind everyone that the recording of this webinar will be posted on the NRRC website for those of you that may have staff that were unable to view. So, CSG, I'm going to turn things over to you to take a few minutes to respond to participant questions.

Sarah Wurzburg: Thanks so much, and if there are additional questions, please feel free to chat them in. The first question is where do individuals stay while they are awaiting housing through the Continuum of Care? So, I'm going to direct that towards the Clark County team: Anna, Amanda, or Deputy Costello.

Amanda Clark: Hi, this is Amanda with Council for the Homeless, and I'm guessing you mean once they are released, but there is not somewhere for them to be permanently housed yet. We have shelters here in Clark County and that is one option; Oxford Houses, recovery housing was also mentioned. We, unlike some other states across the nation, don't have mandatory shelter here, and so, unfortunately, a lot of times people are also outside because we just don't have enough beds to shelter everyone.

Sarah Wurzburg: Thank you. Next question, so in the reentry screening process, do you screen for whether they have lost housing while incarcerated as well, or are you only looking at whether they are experiencing homelessness prior to incarceration?

Amanda Clark: If they were housed prior to incarceration then they would not be eligible for the assessment process that we do at this time. We know that that happens, that people do lose their housing while they're in jail, and we do let them know that the second that they are outside one night they can contact our housing hotline to get connected to those services, but our focus is on serving folks that are actively experiencing homelessness. So, if that wasn't the case prior to going in, they'd still be considered housed until they were released.

Anna Lookingbill: Which has to do with some of the HUD...

Amanda Clark: Has to do with HUD guidelines in terms of defining what that is.

Sarah Wurzburg: Thank you. One other question was actually around Housing First in Clark County, so I think this one's actually for Amanda as well. So, Amanda, can you talk a little bit about how Housing First has played into your effort to coordinate with the jail too?

Amanda Clark: Well, there's a good percentage of the folks that we work with in the jail that also are eligible for the Housing First programs that we have here in Clark County, and that's why the partnership that we have with them is so important, because those that are facing those multiple challenges often have some sort of legal issues wrapped up in that. For us to be able to connect with them through the jail is a really important connection point. These are folks that often aren't going to be seeking services outside of being incarcerated. I don't know if they want information about just what Housing First we have available in Clark County or what that looks like. Do you have further clarification, Sarah?

Sarah Wurzburg: Yeah, so I think it was around how do you staff it and what initiatives, which I think is a much broader question, so I was trying to narrow it down because they were asking if there was 24/7 case management, like, what that actually looks like, but I know in every jurisdiction it can look different.

Amanda Clark: It does, and Council's job up to that point is to get people connected to that, and then there is a difference between who builds and owns the programs versus who is contracted to provide case management. I don't believe there's 24/7 case management at most of the sites that we have, but they do have a lot of interconnected services, like CDM, which provides basic healthcare needs services in those, as well as case managers that are on site, and those different supports working together are what really kind of help provide that structured environment for those people.

Anna Lookingbill: And I just wanted to draw attention to something else that Amanda shared in the webinar. There are over 900 people on the waitlist.

Amanda Clark: On the permanent supportive housing waitlist, and right now we have one family permanent supportive housing placement available, so the need is very great. Clark County's done an excellent job of creating additional permanent supportive housing in our county, but that takes time. It takes time to get funding, it takes time to build things, it takes time to staff things, and so it's just hard to catch up with the need. But I'm really proud of how much that we have done to move us forward over the past couple of years with our housing initiative.

Sarah Wurzburg: Absolutely and such an impressive partnership that's been built with the Sheriff's Office as well. So, I'm just looking at the time, and I'm thinking this will be our last question since we are at time now. The last question I think that makes sense to wrap up on, and maybe Charley you can speak to this first, and then the Clark County team can jump in if they have anything to add. What are some potential funding sources for people reentering the community who need housing?

Charles Francis: Thanks, Sarah. And, you know, I think Clark segued into that perfectly talking about how there is a 900-person waiting list for permanent supportive housing. That is what we see everywhere. Ultimately, you know, we do need to grow this pie.

I think the number one source that everyone wants to start looking at is the American Rescue Plan. I know this is still new to a lot of us, but there are a number of dedicated housing funding streams in there, including additional funding for the HUD HOME program, which is basically flexible development dollars, as well as some voucher assistance and some other programs. In addition, and keep an eye out for some more things coming out from us, there are a number of other provisions providing flexible funding to states and local governments that could be a really good opportunity to engage in some joint planning to really meet the needs of your community with the criminal justice, housing, and behavioral health sectors all at the same table. In addition to that, there's the Byrne Justice Assistance grant, which is flexible funding through the Department of Justice, kind of rare flexible funding in this space, and also just working with maybe who your community foundations or other philanthropy is in your community, because ultimately government can't do it alone, and there are a lot of things from

Pay for Success models to flexible subsidy pools of rental assistance and services that are out there. So, that's just a taste of kind of different strategies.

Sarah Wurzburg: Thanks so much, and I know also the Clark County team is using Second Chance Act funding, so want to promote the other federal opportunities through that as well, because there's a lot of opportunities to promote that through other reentry funding. So, just looking at the time, is there anything else the Clark County team wanted to add in terms of your funding sources for the housing and reentry work before we wrap up?

Anna Lookingbill: I think, it sounds trite, but if this was an easy problem to solve, we would have solved it already, right? We know this is not unique to our area, and we're grateful for the continued partnership, the combination of federal and local funding, and also leveraging what partner agencies can do for us. As a jail, we do a really specific thing, we work with other entities to provide everything from drug treatment to housing to other services. I think that's really the lesson that we've learned is that we have to do these things through partnership, and we're very grateful to the organizations that work with us that allow us to maximize what we can do to support people while they're in custody.

So, thank you for having us today, we're really grateful to be here. Sorry we didn't do the best job with the video camera during the presentation. We're used to running programs in a jail, not being on webcams. So, we really appreciate you having us. Thank you again.

Jennifer Loeffler-Cobia: Wonderful. Thank you all for joining today. That's going to wrap up our session.

I just want to thank you all for joining, and please check out the abundance of reentry resources we have on our website, and the quickest way to get the content is just to go www.reentryweek.org. On the site you also will find a feedback form. We would love to hear from you all about your feedback on the Reentry Week resources as we continue to improve and provide the most updated information to the field.

If you have any further questions for our panelists, please reach out to us at info@nationalreentryresourcecenter.org. We hope that you will join us for other events throughout the week, and thank you all again and enjoy the rest of your day.