

Housing should be prioritized to support re-entry following incarceration, study suggests

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Policymakers and re-entry programs need to prioritize housing to support formerly incarcerated people and reduce recidivism, researchers from the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State

University write in a new study.

The [study](#), "Addressing Barriers to Housing in Re-entry Programs Working to Address a Variety of Needs: A Qualitative Study of Second Chance Act Grantees," was published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*.

Previous research shows stable and safe [housing](#) provides benefits for formerly incarcerated people, including helping them maintain sobriety and [mental health](#), yet securing post-incarceration housing is a pervasive challenge.

This research was conducted as part of an evaluation of the Second Chance Act program. Co-authors Elizabeth Beck and Brian Bride of the School of Social Work; Natasha Johnson, Sommer Delgado, Victoria Helmly and William Sabol of the Department of Criminal Justice & Criminology; Susan A. McLaren, Alice (Prendergast) Boughrum, Leigh Alderman and Eric Napierala of the Georgia Health Policy Center; and Lorenzo Almada of the Department of Economics interviewed 31 people who were three months to three years post-incarceration and analyzed the results. While participants came from three different geographical regions of the United States, commonalities were seen across barriers that formerly incarcerated people face in securing safe and stable housing.

Key findings include:

Financial barriers

- Despite differences in housing markets, [housing affordability](#) was uniformly a challenge.
- Housing affordability was exacerbated by difficulty in securing a

job or finding a job with livable wages or high enough required income.

- Other financial requirements, like deposits and a positive credit history, further complicated securing housing.

Nonfinancial barriers

- Involvement in the criminal legal system substantially limits housing options.
- Prohibitive paperwork requirements combined with inflexible timing of parole meetings made securing help with paperwork challenging.
- Conditions of parole or probation may limit where individuals can live.
- Many leave incarceration without necessary birth certificates, Social Security cards, or other identification needed for securing housing.

Participants noted that while re-entry programs provided valuable assistance in overcoming some of these barriers by offering housing recommendations, existing relationships with landlords, and budgeting and [financial help](#), affordability and housing shortages persist.

The current housing challenges faced by formerly incarcerated individuals parallels broader employment, income, poverty and housing-access issues the country faces as a whole, the co-authors write. Yet there is tremendous opportunity for development of innovative solutions that will have real-world impact by cross-sector partners on the ground, as well as by federal policymakers in the justice and housing sectors.

More information: Addressing Barriers to Housing in Reentry Programs Working to Address a Variety of Needs: A Qualitative Study of Second Chance Act Grantees. *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy*

Development and Research (2023). www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/vol25num2/ch1.pdf

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