

Reducing the Revolving Door of Incarceration and Homelessness in the District of Columbia: Availability of PSH for the Disabled Reentry Population

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Permanent supportive housing (PSH) is the housing of choice for people with major disabilities who go back and forth between homelessness and incarceration, with little hope of establishing a stable community residence.

The District of Columbia had upwards of 3,000 units of PSH in mid-2008, and was in the process of developing more. To see how much existing PSH was occupied by people who had come to it from jail or prison, the Urban Institute did a survey in mid-2008 of all agencies that provide Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) in the District. We found:

- Agencies providing all the PSH units in the District said they would accept people with felony or criminal records as tenants. That is, they would not refuse to rent to someone with a criminal record *per se*.
- Even some particularly challenging histories were acceptable to most providers, at least in theory
 - Providers offering **17%** of PSH units said they would not accept sex offenders—the rest said they would, under certain circumstances.
 - Providers offering **15%** of PSH units said they would not accept clients with a history of violence against or abuse of children or adults.

Nevertheless, only **2%** of the current tenants of the District's PSH units came from jails or prisons.

Ex-offenders may find their way into PSH through the homeless system, but apparently not as a direct connection related to their incarceration, even when they have a major mental illness or other significant disability or have multiple disabilities.

Agencies offering PSH in the District definitely DO have the capacity to serve people with serious and persistent mental illness, chronic substance abuse problems, and co-occurring disorders.

- **91%** of Washington D.C. PSH agencies currently have individuals with these issues as tenants