

Examining Housing as a Pathway to Successful Reentry: A Demonstration Design Process

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Examining Housing as a Pathway to Successful Reentry: A Demonstration Design Process

Prepared for the What Works Collaborative

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Abstract

Given a lack of understanding of the potential for housing to contribute to positive outcomes for formerly incarcerated persons, this paper describes a four-phase demonstration design process that will fill the gaps in the literature and strengthen policy and practice. The reentry housing demonstration would include a range of housing and supportive services for formerly incarcerated persons, primarily focused on making meaningful reductions in returns to incarceration. The associated study would explore whether housing leads to reductions in recidivism and increases in the reintegration of those released from incarceration. In describing the demonstration design process, the paper includes: a brief literature review, key research questions, hypotheses, a logic model and other critical areas worth consideration for a reentry housing demonstration. Examples of potential partnerships and opportunities for reentry housing programming and funding are also discussed. The paper concludes with several key hallmarks for the proposed demonstration to achieve its intended goals.

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0. Introduction

Given the volume of men and women released from incarceration to the community annually and the attendant social and fiscal costs associated with their release, rigorous research is necessary to understand the key ingredients to successful reentry and reintegration. Extant literature shows that individuals released from incarceration face a host of challenges upon release, from obtaining gainful employment and stable housing to receiving services for substance abuse, physical and mental health issues—challenges that, if not overcome, are associated with costly returns to incarceration. Obtaining housing, in particular, has been shown to be a critical barrier for formerly incarcerated persons to overcome for a myriad of reasons.

While there are housing options in the community for the formerly incarcerated, they face difficulties finding stable, independent housing for reasons that range from individual challenges (e.g., employability, substance abuse and mental health histories, strength of family ties) to systematic barriers (e.g., public housing restrictions, landlord discrimination). For these reasons, the moment of release from incarceration places individuals at high risk of residential instability, leading some to experience homelessness upon release. Unfortunately, while previous research has illuminated the housing challenges for those released from correctional institutions, there are significant gaps in our understanding of the efficacy of housing for the reentry population, in and of itself.

The gap in our understanding is notable. It has led to a practical void in the policy arena, across both housing and correctional arenas, targeted to housing formerly incarcerated persons directly. While housing is a source of necessary shelter that provides a form of residential stability for those released from institutions, it can also serve as both the literal and figurative foundation for successful reentry and reintegration. Certainly, it can be argued that securing employment, maintaining sobriety, and staying out of prison, as some key examples, are difficult to achieve without stable housing. That is, housing is a crucial resource through which other outcomes, such as reduced recidivism and successful reintegration, can be achieved. Developing a greater understanding of the ways in which housing serves as a reentry platform could lead to better housing supports for the reentry population, translating into significant public safety gains and future cost savings (primarily through reductions in returns to incarceration).

Given a lack of understanding of the potential for reentry housing and the ongoing interest in evidence-based reentry practices, this paper describes *a demonstration design process* that will fill the gaps in the literature and strengthen policy and practice. Such a demonstration, intended to design, implement, and evaluate housing as a platform for formerly incarcerated persons, would be a first of its kind. The demonstration would include a range of housing and supportive services for formerly incarcerated persons, primarily focused on making meaningful reductions in returns to incarceration for the reentry population, as well as increasing their reintegration prospects, across a range of outcomes. The associated study would explore whether housing leads to reductions in recidivism and increases in the reintegration of those released from incarceration, over both the short and long term.

To describe the demonstration design process, this paper first begins with a brief review of the literature, highlighting the gaps in the field's understanding. The literature review is purposefully brief, given the extensive review provided in the What Works Collaborative Framing paper that precedes this current paper (see Fontaine and Biess 2012). Second, I discuss the research demonstration that will fill the gaps in the existing literature and provide necessary information on the utility of reentry housing. I discuss the research demonstration in broad terms, given that an initial, critical step is to identify

partners willing to tackle this issue as well as to receive support from the appropriate stakeholders and funders. Therefore, the demonstration design process is described over four phases—design and roundtable; site identification and testing; full implementation; and dissemination—following a discussion of the key research questions and associated hypotheses. The discussion of the demonstration includes core areas worth consideration for such a demonstration, including sample size and sampling strategies. Third, I discuss examples of existing ideas for reentry housing programs and funding sources that have been generated by informed partners in the reentry housing field as well as potential opportunities for the described demonstration design process.

1. Review of Prior Research

What We Know

- **Permanent, independent housing is difficult to secure**—Released individuals face significant challenges securing (permanent, independent) housing upon returning from correctional institutions to the community for myriad reasons, such as limited incomes, employment histories and/or employment prospects; few affordable housing options in the communities to which released individuals are most likely to return, insufficient housing assistance during incarceration, as well as discrimination by landlords, particularly in tight rental markets; restrictions on public housing; and shortages in supportive housing programming or an inability to apply/qualify for supportive housing (see Fontaine and Biess 2012 for review).
- **Most rely on family and friends for postrelease housing**—In part because of the difficulty obtaining permanent, independent housing, many released inmates rely on family and friends for postrelease housing. While only a small share of formerly incarcerated persons end up homeless upon release (Metraux et al. 2008; Fontaine, Gilchrist-Scott, Roman, Taxy, Roman 2012a), many find temporary housing with family and other social support networks (La Vigne, Visher, and Castro 2004; Visher, Baer, and Naser 2006; Visher and Courtney 2007; Visher, La Vigne, and Farrell 2003). In addition to the housing, family members provide a great deal of other forms of tangible (and intangible) support, such as money and emotional support, which is sometimes associated with financial strain and emotional hardship among family members (Fontaine, Gilchrist-Scott, Denver, and Rossman 2012b).
- **Housing with family and friends is not always ideal, at least not for everyone, or for long periods of time**—Housing with family and other social support networks is less than ideal for many returning from incarceration. Indeed, many of those released from incarceration may not have family or support networks in the location they want to return to or may have severed or strained ties with family or friends (Fontaine et al. 2012b). In addition, family members of former prisoners report very limited incomes and employment histories and many have their own criminal justice histories and service needs (Brooks et al. 2008; Fontaine et al. 2012b; Visher and Courtney 2007). Recent research also suggests that released prisoners who move away from their former neighborhood, presumably where family/friends currently live, may help individuals distance themselves from their criminogenic environments (Kirk 2009; 2012). Through surveys and focus groups of former prisoners, we've learned that some would prefer to have their own, independent housing since they believe more residential stability and housing will help them in their reentry goals (Visher and Farrell 2005) and because many recognize the adverse impact their return has on family—particularly those they are living with (Fontaine et al. 2012b).

- **Formerly incarcerated persons experience high rates of residential instability**—Released individuals experience residential instability in the weeks and months following release from incarceration, particularly because many individuals only establish temporary or transitional housing arrangements postrelease (Visher and Farrell 2005; Visher, Yahner, and La Vigne 2010). This instability can take the form of episodes of homelessness as well as frequent moves, some of which may be due to the instability associated with housing with family and friends. The temporary nature of postrelease housing may also, in part, be exacerbated by correctional policies requiring a fixed address before a person is permitted to be released, leading some individuals to identify an address that is *only* temporary.

With a few notable exceptions, discussed below, there is scant empirical evidence on the relationship between specific housing models and reentry and reintegration outcomes.¹ In this paper, housing is a broad term that refers to independent housing, subsidized housing units, supportive housing programs, and community correctional facilities or halfway houses. The provision of housing for formerly incarcerated persons is often bundled with other comprehensive reentry services geared toward a general reentry population, making it difficult to isolate the impact of housing on other outcomes (see Miller and Ngugi 2009). Yet, the evaluation evidence on specific housing models for former offenders that has been mounted to date is promising.

- **For former prisoners with behavioral health histories, housing does lead to (some) better outcomes**—Permanent supportive housing is a well-known best practice for individuals with behavioral health issues and histories of homelessness (see Rog 2004 and Rogers et al. 2004 for review). Therefore, extending this model to those released from incarceration should be effective, theoretically. Indeed, recent research by Fontaine and colleagues (2012a) showed that the provision of supportive housing for those released from Ohio state prisons with behavioral health issues and residential instability is a practice associated with very promising one-year outcomes using available administrative data:
 - Supportive housing significantly reduced the rate of rearrest and reincarceration
 - Supportive housing significantly increased the number of rearrests—that is, those housed had more rearrest episodes than those that were not housed in the program
 - Supportive housing significantly increased the time between release and criminal justice contact
 - Supportive housing significantly increased the incidence and prevalence of behavioral health service use and reduced the time from release to behavioral health use
 - Supportive housing was not associated with any significant change in emergency shelter use postrelease, few individuals in the program group or comparison group used emergency shelters following prison release

Additional questions remain, including whether the effectiveness of housing continues over other periods of time (i.e., longer than one year); whether outcomes would be greater when individuals are housed for a longer period of time (some were not housed for weeks or months

¹In fact, staff members of the What Works in Reentry Clearinghouse, a web-based tool offering guidance to practitioners and service providers on evidence-based reentry interventions, were recently able to identify only three studies that were rigorous enough to discern the impact of housing on reentry outcomes. All three were specific to halfway houses (see http://whatworks.csgjusticecenter.org/focus_areas/housing), which are referenced in this paper.

following release); whether certain housing models were particularly effective (since the program included scatter-site and single-site housing options); and what other outcomes were associated with the housing (e.g., employment, family reunification). Additional research on this same dataset provided evidence that former prisoners with certain demographic characteristics fared better in the postrelease housing than others. Particularly, former prisoners that were housed by the program with substance abuse disorders, personality disorders, and more previous incarcerations had a higher likelihood of postrelease justice system contact than those housed without those disorders and fewer incarcerations (Fontaine forthcoming). It is unclear whether individuals with these characteristics are particularly hard to serve or whether they were under-served by the program.

- **Former jail detainees with behavioral health and homelessness histories also appear to fare better with supportive housing**—Previous research on those with significant histories of cycling between jails and shelters in New York City also demonstrated promising outcomes following the provision of supportive housing. Specifically, the supportive housing was associated with significant reductions in the length of stay in NYC jails and shelters and the rate of shelter readmissions, though not the rate of jail readmissions (Corporation for Supportive Housing 2009).
- **Halfway houses appear effective for medium-risk and high-risk individuals**—The use of halfway houses (or community correctional facilities) is a promising practice for former prisoners. According to a summary of the evidence of halfway houses from the What Works in Reentry Clearinghouse,² halfway houses in Ohio showed large significant impacts for individuals that were assessed as being at medium- or high-risk of recidivating (Lowenkamp and Latessa 2002). These same evaluation findings suggest that individuals assessed as being at low-risk of recidivating may be adversely affected by halfway houses. This study, and others, highlights the importance of matching the treatment (housing) to the level of need and risk (Lowenkamp, Latessa, and Smith 2006). Unfortunately, given that the use of community correctional facilities or halfway houses varies across place—halfway houses have been alternatively used for high-risk releases or low-risk prison releases or as work-release centers—it is difficult to draw broad implications from this study. This may be one reason why the evidence on halfway houses is mixed overall (La Vigne 2010).
- **Peer-led treatment housing models also appear effective**—Research has shown that recovery housing models with peer-led treatment for individuals with substance abuse issues, called Oxford Houses, are associated with reductions in recidivism and the use of substances, and increases their employment prospects (see Jason and Ferrari 2010 for review). Though Oxford Houses are not a specific housing model for those leaving prisons and jails directly, they nevertheless serve a population with criminal justice histories given the overlap in these groups (former offenders and substance abusers).

What We Don't Know

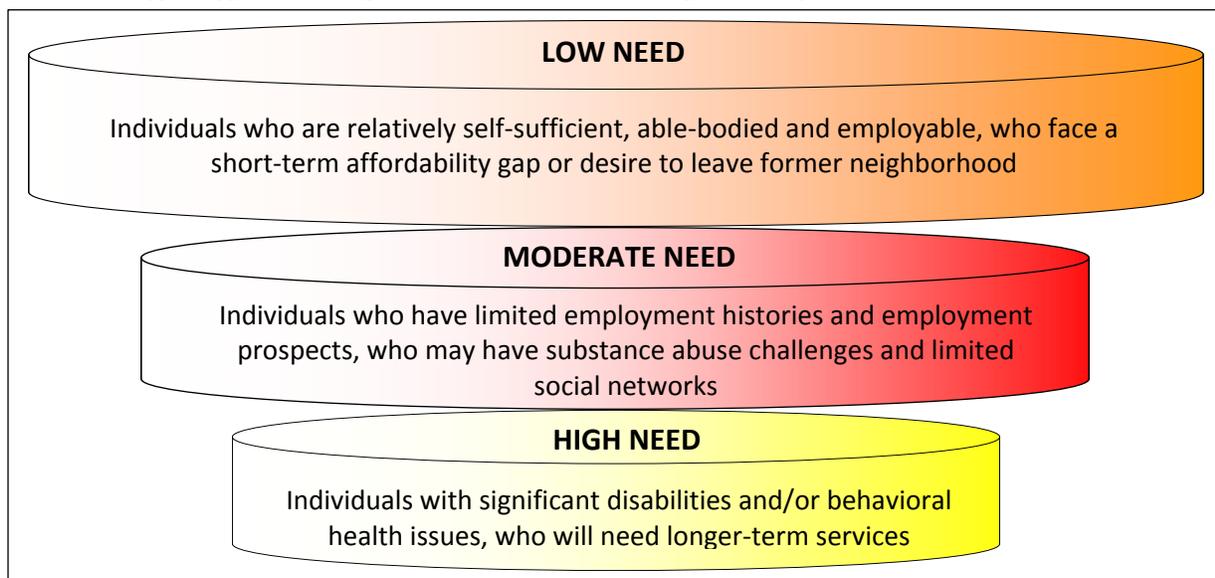
In summary, the evidence shows that (a) housing with supportive services is associated with some positive outcomes for the subset of those released with behavioral health histories and residential instability; (b) halfway houses are promising for those assessed as being at medium or high risk of

²http://whatworks.csgjusticecenter.org/focus_areas/housing.

recidivating; and (c) Oxford Houses' peer-led recovery models are promising for substance abusers. Yet, not every individual released from incarceration has behavioral health challenges and therefore, may not need or benefit from supportive housing or peer-led recovery homes. And, given the variation in jurisdictions' use of halfway houses, the lessons from Ohio's use of halfway houses may not translate to other places. While the limited information available is promising, it is narrowly focused on a subset of the reentry population and high need, expensive housing supports.

In general, there is the need for more evidence on the utility of housing along the continuum of need, from temporary or transitional housing (e.g., halfway houses) or housing vouchers for individuals that are relatively self-sufficient or low need through permanent supportive housing for individuals that are less self-sufficient or high need (**exhibit A**). Quite simply, individuals released from incarceration—prisons and jails—need different postrelease housing supports and likely, need different service options associated with the housing (e.g., job assistance, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment). The postrelease housing need and associated supportive services are likely related to a host of different factors, including whether a person has family and social support networks to return to; prefers not to return to his or her family or social support networks or the neighborhood where he or she formerly lived; and has difficulties maintaining independent housing due to limited income, or limited ability to earn income because of mental or physical health disabilities or a lack of employment experiences. In addition, the need for postrelease housing is both immediate and long term and for some, may change over time. Whereas some individuals may have only temporary (and perhaps immediate) housing needs that will lead them to other positive outcomes (i.e., a housing voucher that will assist them in finding stable employment), others may need long-term supportive housing.

Exhibit A: Typology of Housing and Service Needs among Formerly Incarcerated Persons



Source: Adapted by the Urban Institute from a typology advanced by the Corporation for Supportive Housing (2010).

Another consideration for postrelease housing models, as evidenced by Lowenkamp and Latessa (2002), is an assessment of criminogenic risk. Risk and need are different and the evidence shows, for example, that criminogenic risk does not necessarily align with mental health or substance abuse need factors, for example (Reentry Policy Council 2004). This is evident since criminogenic risk factors and need factors

are focused on modifying different behaviors and conditions. For some individuals, their risk of recidivism is associated with their substance use, for example, and therefore addressing their need for substance abuse treatment would lead to reductions in recidivism theoretically. Yet, individuals' behavioral health issues may or may not be associated with their criminal justice system contact (Du, Zhao, and Hser 2011; MacArthur Research Network 2005; Singh, Grann, and Fazel 2010). For those with needs and risks that are not aligned, a substance abuse treatment program, for example, may assist a person in modifying his or her drug abuse, but do very little to reduce an individual's reoffending behavior. Complicating this a bit further is the reality that, as already discussed, we have very limited information as to whether housing should be considered a criminogenic risk factor (i.e., it is associated with recidivism) rather than just a service need.

The question remains whether housing leads to better outcomes for formerly incarcerated persons. Outcomes should be defined broadly to include reductions in recidivism primarily as well as reductions in substance abuse and increases in employment, family reunification and support, and mental and physical health.

2. Demonstration Design and Methodology Considerations

To overcome the gaps in the existing literature and provide necessary information on how housing can be a platform for returning prisoners, a four-phased demonstration is proposed that would strengthen policy and practice.

Research Questions

Given what is already known about housing for formerly incarcerated persons and the knowledge gaps, the demonstration is intended to answer the following key questions (see **exhibit b** for the demonstration logic):

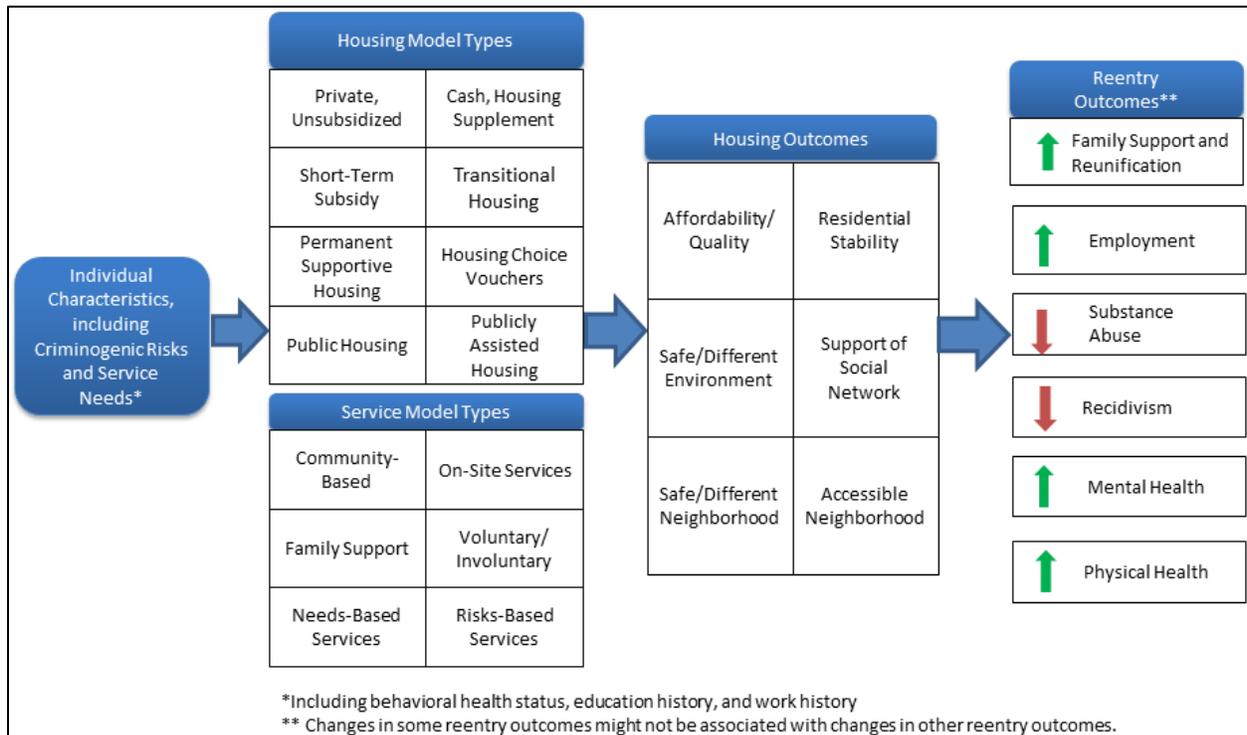
- Does housing lead to better postrelease outcomes for formerly incarcerated persons (e.g., recidivism, substance abuse, employment, education, family reunification and support, mental health, physical health)?
- How are the characteristics of formerly incarcerated persons (e.g., age, race, gender, criminal history) and the characteristics of the housing (e.g., transitional versus permanent) related to outcomes?
- How does the timing of housing receipt, duration of housing, and type of housing relate to outcomes?
- Are there differences in the short-term and long-term outcomes for formerly incarcerated persons offered housing?

Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that housing, in general, will reduce recidivism in both the short and long term. Further, it is hypothesized that the housing will be *most* effective if it is associated with services that are based on the criminogenic risk and service needs of the targeted population. Finally, consistent with reentry programming best practices, the services should begin during incarceration, following the assessment of criminogenic risk and needs, and include transitional services that continue from incarceration to the community for an extended period of time, beginning as near to release as possible (Petersilia 2004; Visher and Travis 2011).

The population targeted by the demonstration would be informed by the housing available, that is, whether transitional, temporary, and/or permanent housing is going to be provided. The assessment of criminogenic risk and reentry needs should be tailored to the available housing, maximizing the potential for the demonstration.

Exhibit B: Demonstration Logic



Proposed Demonstration Design Process

Phase I. Design and Roundtable

The first phase of the demonstration project will be to finalize the research design through an updated literature review and roundtable. The research design should be informed by both the extant literature and informed stakeholders. Based on the Urban Institute’s previous work in this area—as just described and including the development of the What Works Collaborative framing paper, several research reports, and policy briefs—we have already generated a solid understanding of the extant literature. To assist in finalizing the research design, the What Works Collaborative framing paper should be updated with literature published over the past few years and used as a guide to frame the issues. Then, we would host a roundtable on the issue, using the updated literature review as the foundation.

At the national level, the Justice Policy Center at UI has convened roundtables to understand the dimensions of complex issues and to identify solutions to address these issues. For this reentry housing demonstration, stakeholders that are currently involved in housing and serving formerly incarcerated persons would be invited to participate as well as potential funders interested in this topic. UI has current partnerships with a handful of agencies that have provided limited housing supports in the past. These agencies would be invited to participate in the roundtable and ideal candidates for the demonstration. In addition, the roundtable helps ensure there is general support for the demonstration,

in particular, among partners who might be willing to implement and provide funding for the demonstration.

It is expected that the information gleaned from the stakeholders through the roundtable will inform the demonstration in two critical ways. First, it will help inform the demonstration methodology. Methodological considerations include (a) whether a sample of soon-to-be released persons should be drawn from state prisons, federal prisons, or local jails; (b) what agencies or programs could partner with the study; and (c) what valid and reliable risk and need assessment tools are available and could be used for the demonstration. Second, it will help inform the survey instrument that will be used in the demonstration, to ensure the most appropriate domains and constructs are included. The administration of a survey that would explore changes over time is critical for the proposed demonstration, given that prior research has relied heavily on administrative datasets. It is unclear whether changes in non-criminal justice system outcomes can be attributed to reentry housing. Outcomes such as employment, income, family reunification and support, and physical and mental health are not reliably captured in administrative data. The survey should be implemented at three points in time: baseline (pre-treatment) and two follow up periods (during and post-treatment), to explore short- and long-term changes over time.

Following the literature review and roundtable, UI would design a survey to be implemented among study participants, treatment and comparison, and a data collection protocol for administrative data systems. The feasibility of the survey and administrative data collection will be informed by the roundtables. The administrative data collection protocol would include: department of corrections and other criminal justice agencies, such as law enforcement; unemployment insurance data systems; behavioral health service systems; and homeless management information systems. Previous experience has shown that administrative data collection from criminal justice systems, behavioral health systems, and homelessness management information systems for evaluation purposes is routine. Previous experience suggests that administering survey instruments to study participants drawn from the reentry population for evaluation purposes is also routine, yet costly. The feasibility of administering the survey in this demonstration would need to be contextualized with the chosen target population, given that they could be particularly hard to find and survey postrelease than the general reentry population (e.g., those with chronic homeless histories or severe mental illness). The literature review and roundtable will supplement our current understanding of the issues to be included in the survey, but in general, we expect the survey to cover the following domains: employment, family and social support, friendships, mental and physical health, and substance use and victimization.

Phase II. Site Identification and Testing

After the roundtable, UI will identify a site or sites for the demonstration and work with them on implementation. Testing the demonstration's sample recruitment and sample instruments would be the first step, to troubleshoot issues and identify the most effective and efficient methodologies for full implementation. Part of the testing will include the identification of possible sampling strategies that will generate the requisite sample sizes for the demonstration. After the sample recruitment is finalized, the survey instrument should be tested to determine when it is most feasible to administer it. To explore the outcomes proposed and the relationship between the housing, supportive services, and the characteristics of the sample group, the sample size should include no fewer than approximately 400 individuals, allowing for some sample attrition to the survey administration. Sufficient protocols would need to be in place to minimize sample attrition, such as frequent check-ins with the sample and incentives to sample participants to keep in touch with the research team.

It might be plausible given the set of partners, that the research sample for the demonstration is drawn directly from prisons and/or jails only or through prisons/jails and the community. The sample could be generated using only existing administrative data on the eligible target population (e.g., homeless history, criminal justice history, behavioral health assessments) or through conversations with soon-to-be released individuals on data not captured administratively (e.g., interest in and need for postrelease housing based on family needs). Each sampling strategy has its own unique set of benefits and challenges. Ideally, the sample would include only individuals who are currently incarcerated, enabling the risks and needs assessments to inform the postrelease housing support, thereby maximizing the potential for individual's postrelease success. Further, the demonstration should identify the target population using existing data systems, such as correctional data on criminogenic risks as well as service needs (e.g., behavioral health assessments or history of residential instability). Previous experience has shown us that the use of the existing administrative data systems is the preferred sample recruitment method, over the use of conversations with participants (see Roman, Fontaine, Fallon, Anderson, and Rearer 2012). Further, the use of existing administrative data systems helps inform the potential case flow and would support a random assignment design or quasi-experimental design using natural selection. Existing administrative data could be used to identify a fixed or rolling list of eligible participants, generated on an ongoing basis, or through a data matching mechanism that identifies eligible participants in real time (e.g., upon admission to the correctional institution).

Having a flexible sampling strategy that includes prerelease and postrelease recruitment, however, affords the demonstration the best opportunity to achieving a sufficient sample size and enrollment flow to support the study. Previous experience has repeatedly shown us that research samples drawn during incarceration can often yield low case flow and the need to recruit those in the community that were "missed" during their incarceration period. Study recruitment during incarceration can be challenged when there are inefficient or non-existent data systems to identify the target population and when there is insufficient time to identify and recruit eligible participants. The problem of low case flow is further exacerbated when a sample is drawn from a local jail, given that the population in local jails can cycle through quickly and jails often lack the administrative data systems to identify program participants (e.g., risks assessments). Yet, a sample drawn directly from the community would likely have difficulty locating the target population, however defined. In addition, a community sample would be significantly biased from a reentry perspective, given that the first days and weeks of release from incarceration have been shown to be the most critical for determining postrelease reentry success.

Phase III. Full Implementation

Following the site selection and final decisions on the sample recruitment, the demonstration should be fully implemented in three to four sites, depending on the level of resources. While it may be difficult to identify multiple sites for implementation, the use of multiple sites provides more reliable findings for the criminal justice and housing field. The sites could include several prisons/jails within the same or different states or cities. The findings are more generalizable to the extent the sites represent geographic diversity. Full implementation will be based on lessons learned from phase II. The methodology will be adjusted in each site, as necessary. For the proposed demonstration, it would be appropriate to use random assignment and/or a rigorous quasi-experimental design using propensity score matching or propensity score weighting techniques to minimize selection bias.

The first option is to use random assignment, where assignment to the housing is based on random selection. This option would use a prospective sample of individuals released from incarceration (prison or jail, depending on the site), identified near their release date. After the target population has been

identified, we would prospectively track returning individuals, some of whom would be randomly assigned to receive the housing support and others that would receive business-as-usual reentry services. Surveys would be administered to both treatment and comparison group participants, beginning prerelease, and administrative data would also be collected on the entire sample. Based on previous experience, the postrelease tracking should continue for more than one year, up to three, to determine whether postrelease housing has both short- and long-term benefits. In addition, an extended follow-up period is preferable to allow individuals to reap greater benefits from experiencing stable housing.

The second option is to use a quasi-experimental design. The quasi-experimental design is less than optimal, given previous experience showing that housing providers and correctional staff tend to use (understandably) biased mechanisms for selecting which individuals should receive postrelease housing supports. Depending on the site, the quasi-experimental design should use a natural comparison group, such as a waiting list, and provide the opportunity for propensity score weighting. Otherwise, the identification of a comparison group using propensity scores on available administrative data is a good option to matching the comparison group to those selected for housing. Similar to the random assignment design, the quasi-experimental design should use a prospective sample of individuals near their release date. The individuals would be tracked for up to three years, to determine whether postrelease housing has short- and long-term benefits.

Phase IV. Dissemination

A comprehensive dissemination strategy should accompany the demonstration, including policy reports, roundtables targeted to policymakers and practitioners, and peer-reviewed publications distributed through the web, email, blogs, and social media. The roundtables should be convened depending on the themes that emerge from the demonstration, using policy reports generated from the demonstration to generate conversation. The topics for the policy reports and roundtables would include each of the outcomes measured through the demonstration, including a roundtable on the criminal justice, employment, health and mental health, and substance abuse findings, as relevant. Other roundtable topics that are likely to follow the demonstration would include lessons on collaboration between the criminal justice and housing fields. The roundtables would be useful in generating actionable changes to policy and practice, ideally at various levels: local policy and practice as well as state and federal policies and practices. The ultimate goal of the demonstration is to demonstrate the utility of reentry housing as a best practice for those released from correctional institutions and translate actionable lessons nationally based on the demonstration's implementation. In addition, public forums in the sites selected for the demonstration's full implementation would also be used to generate local interest in policies and programs for the returning population.

3. Potential Partnerships and Opportunities

Based on what we know regarding reentry housing and relationships with stakeholders involved in developing and implementing reentry models, there are several ways to execute the proposed demonstration design process. Ideally, the demonstration would include a strong partnership with the following agencies:

- **Correctional institution(s)** willing to identify the potential population and allow prerelease participants surveys
- **Housing agency/agencies** willing to provide housing supports for released individuals for up to three years

- **Service providers** willing to partner with the housing agency and reach into the prisons/jails to provide rerelease reentry planning and support
- **Housing or criminal justice advocacy agency**, like the Corporation for Supportive Housing, or another community-based partner willing to provide overall project management and oversight
- **Research organization**, like the Urban Institute, that could assist in developing and evaluating the demonstration as just described and measure process, outcomes, and impacts, including costs

Following several years of working on these issues from the perspective of reducing homelessness, the Corporation for Supportive Housing recently developed a working concept paper for reentry housing to reduce homelessness and recidivism. As outlined below, the paper includes two proposals: one targeted to the low-need population and the other targeted to the high-need population (Corporation for Supportive Housing 2012).

- **Justice-assisted supportive housing program**—that uses US Department of Housing and Urban Development Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers that state or local jurisdictions could apply for, as a partnership between correctional agencies, human services agencies, and a local public housing authority; the US Department of Justice would fund supportive services and case management
- **Rapid reentry housing for rehabilitation program**—that uses US Department of Justice funding to target individuals (and their families) with histories of homelessness and risk of homelessness upon prison/jail release that state or local jurisdictions could apply for, as a partnership between correctional agencies, human services agencies, public housing authorities, or behavioral health, substance abuse, and employment agencies and community-based provider agencies.

These two proposals provide a good starting point in identifying potential funding opportunities and partners for a reentry housing demonstration. It is unclear whether funding from these two federal agencies, justice and housing, is available for reentry housing in the near term. Yet, there is still the need to develop the reentry housing demonstration in the process described, to maximize any demonstration's ability to fill the gaps in our current understanding. The demonstration design process ensures buy-in from the necessary agency partners and a full consideration of the factors necessary to support evaluation. There are other, existing opportunities that could also be leveraged for the proposed demonstration process.

- **Expanding on existing reentry housing programming**—Based on the promising findings from the evaluation in Ohio previously described, the supportive housing program is continuing with funding from the state prison system. The program, called Returning Home—Ohio and others, may provide an opportunity for developing a larger demonstration. The Corporation for Supportive Housing is implementing the Returning Home—Ohio program and through its larger Returning Home Initiative, is implementing other reentry housing programs across the country. These programs, and others, may provide a useful starting point to launching a larger demonstration process.
- **Expanding on existing large-scale reentry efforts and initiatives**—There is broad interest in reentry programming and services at the federal level, including the Bureau of Justice Assistance-funded Second Chance Act, the US Department of Health and Human Services Community-Centered Responsible Fatherhood Reentry program, as two examples, which may

provide funding opportunities for the proposed demonstration given their focus on evidence-based solutions for serving the reentry population.

- **Expanding on existing housing supports that are offered to the reentry community**—As shown in a survey of housing providers in the District of Columbia (Burt and Hall 2009) and conversations with public housing authorities, formerly incarcerated persons are in supportive housing programs and public housing facilities. Working with the agencies that are already providing these services and getting them to work with correctional departments directly, may be helpful in initiating the proposed demonstration process. It may be possible to track the outcomes of the individuals with criminal justice histories in housing facilities and work with administrative data systems to generate a meaningful comparison group.

4. Conclusion

Given the continued interest in the topic of reentry and the ongoing challenges housing availability and stability presents in successful reintegration, this proposed demonstration represents a viable and valuable undertaking: the time is optimal for its implementation. In order to achieve its intended goals, the demonstration should include the following hallmarks:

1. Have buy-in from correctional agencies, housing partners, community-based service providers, and housing and criminal justice advocates
2. Be multisite
3. Enroll/recruit participants from a sample of soon-to-be released prisoners/jail detainees
4. Use existing administrative datasets to determine program eligibility, as much as possible
5. Employ random assignment to assign the available housing or quasi-experimental design with propensity score/matching techniques
6. Include housing supports along the continuum, as much as possible
7. Track participant outcomes broadly, through surveys and available administrative data, for several years postrelease
8. Disseminate the findings widely

It is clear that housing has the potential for being a pathway to successful reentry for formerly incarcerated persons. The purposeful use of housing in this way holds promise in reducing costly returns to prison while increasing public safety and public health. Of course, additional housing supports would be a tremendous benefit for formerly incarcerated persons and their families. Additional information is needed on how housing of all types and its characteristics can lead to better outcomes for released adults, including reductions in recidivism, substance abuse, and other risky behaviors; increases in employment and wages; and improvements in mental and physical health. The information generated from the demonstration would be critical to corrections departments, informing their discharge practices and potentially elevating the importance of housing in reentry planning. The US Department of Justice, specifically the National Institute of Corrections, would also benefit from the information gleaned through the proposed demonstration by potentially developing specific training and technical assistance tools to help correctional departments strengthen their discharge planning practices with respect to housing. Finally, the results of the proposed demonstration would also inform the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's policies on the importance of housing vouchers and housing assistance directed to formerly incarcerated persons or otherwise made available to them through existing housing voucher programs, policies, and procedures.

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