

Solutions for Just Housing:

Technical Assistance to State Housing Finance Agencies

Who we are

Founded in 1961, the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) is a national organization that partners with impacted communities and government agencies to end the criminalization and mass incarceration of people of color, immigrants, and people experiencing poverty. The Opening Doors to Housing Initiative (Opening Doors) at Vera seeks to remove barriers to housing, as a person's conviction history should not be a barrier to having a roof over their head. Since 2017, Vera has collaborated with public housing authorities in 12 states to decrease housing barriers for people with conviction histories. Opening Doors is now working to ensure people with conviction histories gain access to housing through policy change and technical assistance to state housing finance agencies (HFAs) through the Solutions for Just Housing (SJH) program.

How we work

Through an annual request for proposal process, Vera selects HFAs that are interested in receiving at least 12 months of technical assistance to analyze and modify their policies and/or design programs to increase housing opportunities for people with conviction histories. Vera's technical assistance, which comes at no financial cost to HFAs, includes

- › policy analysis to improve and strengthen tenant screening;
- › community stakeholder engagement;
- › program design and implementation support;
- › research and data analysis;
- › pre-evaluation planning; and
- › public education.

Apply to work with us

October 1, 2025: Application opens

December 1, 2025: Submission deadline

December 20, 2025: Completion of semifinalist review

January 15, 2026: Notification of selected proposals

Apply at our website: <https://www.vera.org/investing-in-communities/opening-doors-to-housing-initiative>.

Why this work matters

Safe, affordable housing is essential for the success and well-being of the roughly one in three adult United States residents with a conviction history.¹ Access to housing is associated with

- › greater access to family support;
- › higher likelihood of employment;
- › better ability to rebuild supportive social networks; and
- › lower likelihood of additional criminal legal system involvement.²

There is no evidence that housing people with conviction histories makes communities less safe. However, people with conviction histories face barriers when trying to secure housing. These barriers impact public safety and community well-being and contribute to the cyclical relationship between housing insecurity and criminal legal system involvement.

Formerly incarcerated people are 10 times more likely to experience homelessness.³

People experiencing homelessness are 11 times more likely to be arrested.⁴

For more information about Solutions for Just Housing, please reach out to Caroline Iosso at ciosso@vera.org.

Impact

Through the Solutions for Just Housing program, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development adopted a new [tenant screening policy](#). This policy includes an individualized assessment of applicants with conviction histories and applies to all housing finance agency-funded housing.

¹ Clean Slate Initiative, "Our Data Dashboard," <https://www.cleanslateinitiative.org/data>.

² Amanda Geller and Marah A. Curtis, "A Sort of Homecoming: Incarceration and the Housing Security of Urban Men," *Social Science Research* 40, no. 4 (2011), 1196–1213, 1197, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/46443188_A_Sort_of_Homecoming_Incarceration_and_the_Housing_Security_of_Urban_Men; Marta Nelson, Perry Deess, and Charlotte Allen, *The First Month Out: Post-Incarceration Experiences in New York City* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 1999), 16, <https://www.vera.org/publications/the-first-month-out-post-incarceration-experiences-in-new-york-city>; and Rebecca L. Naser and Nancy G. La Vigne, "Family Support in the Prisoner Reentry Process: Expectations and Realities," *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* 43, no. 1 (2006), 93–106, <https://perma.cc/U7C2-XNV7>.

³ Lucius Couloute, "Nowhere to Go: Homelessness Among Formerly Incarcerated People," Prison Policy Initiative, August 2018, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/housing.html>.

⁴ Tristia Bauman, Rajan Bal, Karianna Barr, et al., *Housing Not Handcuffs 2019: Ending the Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities* (Washington, DC: National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2019), 50, <https://perma.cc/A7JU-5HDL>.