



Our Recommendations to Public Housing Authorities:

1. **ALLOW PEOPLE ON PAROLE OR PROBATION ACCESS TO SUBSIDIZED HOUSING.** Currently, many PHAs in Massachusetts automatically deny people on parole or probation access to subsidized housing programs, preventing some of the most vulnerable Massachusetts residents from having access to stable, affordable housing.
2. **LIMIT RELEVANT CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECKS TO SERIOUS CRIMES.** PHAs should prohibit the consideration of offenses such as larceny or drug possession when determining an applicant's housing eligibility.
3. **LIMIT BACKGROUND CHECKS TO CONVICTIONS, NOT ARRESTS.** As HUD noted in 2015, "arrest records are often inaccurate or incomplete." Arrest records should never be seen as proof of criminal activity or used as a basis for evicting, denying admission, or terminating a resident's voucher.
4. **CONDUCT NEUTRAL, HOLISTIC INVESTIGATIONS BEFORE DENYING APPLICANTS OR PROPOSING VOUCHER TERMINATIONS.** Currently, applicants are often provisionally denied and then offered an opportunity to dispute or mitigate their criminal record to avoid denial. This puts the burden of proof entirely on the applicant to demonstrate that they should be admitted. Instead, PHAs should conduct neutral, holistic investigations that consider mitigating factors before reaching a proposed denial of eligibility.
5. **ENSURE THAT ALL JUSTICE-INVOLVED INDIVIDUALS WITH PROPOSED DENIALS, TERMINATIONS AND EVICTIONS HAVE REPRESENTATION.** When PHAs intend to deny applicants on the basis of their criminal record, they should refer the applicant to legal or community representation free of charge by partnering with community organizations to create a referral system for such applicants.
6. **ENACT POLICIES TO SUPPORT THE REUNIFICATION OF FAMILIES IN SUBSIDIZED HOUSING.** Justice-involved individuals should be allowed to move back in with their families upon release.

7. **CURB THE UNJUSTIFIED USE OF NO-VISIT NO-RESIDE AGREEMENTS.** When the family member of a resident is arrested or faces legal trouble, PHAs often ask the resident to sign a “No Visit, No Reside” agreement to bar their family member from living with or visiting them. If they refuse to sign the agreement, they face eviction or subsidy termination. This practice should be severely restricted and, in extreme cases where it is implemented, be time-limited.
8. **SET ASIDE A NUMBER OF UNITS FOR JUSTICE-INVOLVED INDIVIDUALS.** In 2021, the BHA announced it would provide 15 vouchers set aside for justice-involved individuals. Other Massachusetts PHAs should follow suit.
9. **REDUCE LOOKBACK PERIODS.** In Massachusetts, PHAs can look at criminal records as far back as 7 years for felonies and 3 years for misdemeanors. But many PHAs use shorter lookback periods, including a one-year lookback period in Seattle and a two-year lookback period in Los Angeles. PHAs in Massachusetts should follow these examples and substantially reduce their CORI lookback periods.
10. **DO NOT CONSIDER SEALABLE CORI RECORDS AND SUPPORT CORI REFORM.** Currently, the process to “seal” one’s CORI is done inefficiently on an individual basis. PHAs should support legislative efforts to provide greater and equal access to CORI sealing.
11. **ENACT FAIR CHANCE POLICIES.** Applicants’ eligibility should first be assessed without consideration of their criminal record. Criminal records should only be considered after an initial determination is made that the applicant is otherwise eligible.
12. **IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION ON JUSTICE-INVOLVED APPLICATIONS AND TERMINATIONS.** Data on the voucher and tenancy terminations and application denials of justice-involved individuals should be collected by PHAs and made public.

Far From Home Report and Campaign Website:

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Far From Home Campaign Website: <http://www.DeCriminalizeHousing.org>

Justice 4 Housing website: <http://www.justice4housing.org>

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