CURRENT CONDITIONS

We estimate that there are about 6,300 people in Hampden County in a given year with a criminal record. Many people face barriers to accessing affordable housing due to their CORI & sometimes for crimes that happened 10-40 years ago. Access to housing is essential to health.

- Consideration of criminal history has systematically been inserted into housing decisions.
- Policies of mass incarceration have led to many more people with records, who are disproportionately Black and Latino/a.
- People who have been incarcerated are estimated to be 11x more likely to experience homelessness than people who have not been incarcerated.
- We estimate that there are about 6,300 people in Hampden County in a given year with a criminal record. Many people face barriers to accessing affordable housing due to their CORI & sometimes for crimes that happened 10-40 years ago. Access to housing is essential to health.
- Most barriers to housing tend to apply not just to people with criminal backgrounds but also to other residents of public housing.

People age 50+ with a record are at 11x more likely to experience homelessness & housing instability, as well as their responsibility to ensure a peaceful & safe environment for all residents.

- Policies of mass incarceration have led to many more people with records, who are disproportionately Black and Latino/a.
- Limiting tenant selection criteria may lead to fewer denials.
- There are barriers to application process, including requesting hearing to appeal & present mitigating circumstances.
- Systematic tracking of denials is very limited. We were unable to obtain local data on denial rates.
- NHAs should consider age (50+) a mitigating factor.
- Screening criteria can be challenging to access.
- Databases of criminal records are kept by local governments.
- Create explicit criteria for denial that is available publicly.
- Sharing data about denials.
- Data is an incentive to behavior & increases transparency.
- Allowing family members to house relatives with a CORI would arguably address one of the largest needs for people returning from prison and jail.
- Background checks are required by LHAs. Use federal criteria & mitigating circumstances to make fair decisions.

ADDITINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Fund: More partnerships between housing & service providers
- A pilot program (like Graduated Reintegration Program) to set aside housing for people exiting prison/jail
- Change LHA practices: Consider age (50+) an automatic “mitigation” if no crimes in last 2 years. Designate staff person/navigator to help applicants.
- Change LHA practices: More partnerships between housing & service providers.
- Change LHA practices: Use only federal criteria & mitigating circumstances to make fair decisions.
- Change LHA practices: With more explicit criteria, applicants will have more knowledge going into the process, which might result in more applications & appeals.
- Change LHA practices: There are barriers to application process, including requesting hearing to appeal & present mitigating circumstances.
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