



Preventing Homelessness

Individuals Exiting Jail in Los Angeles County



Individuals exiting incarceration often face significant housing instability, making targeted prevention strategies essential for long-term success. This brief provides an overview of programs aimed at preventing homelessness among people leaving jail in Los Angeles County, highlights recent developments, and identifies opportunities to strengthen the systems that serve these individuals.

Introduction

The relationship between incarceration and homelessness is well-documented: people who were previously incarcerated are nearly ten times more likely to be unhoused than those who have not spent time in jail or prison,¹ while national estimates suggest that more than 50,000 people each year leave jail or prison without a stable housing placement.² Intervening at the time of exit from jail or prison can be transformative, given the right support. However, coordinating this support is especially challenging in large jail systems, or when housing options are limited or unaffordable.

Individuals leaving jail in Los Angeles County experience the same challenges as those in many major cities, including poor credit history, prohibitive application fees and security deposits, public housing restrictions, background checks, landlord bias, and parole or probation conditions that further limit their housing options. In addition, the lack of affordable housing is also a significant factor: LA County has fewer than 20 units available per 100 extremely low-income renters.³ Drawing from a review of key documents and interviews with selected county agency staff, community organizations, and people with lived experience, this brief explores currently available programs and services that prevent immediate homelessness at the time of release, highlights recent shifts in policy, and identifies opportunities for improvement. The audience for this report includes system funders, government agencies, community organizations, and other groups that focus on homeless preventions strategies.

Background

The Intersection Between Incarceration and Homelessness in LA County

LA County faces one of the most complex reentry challenges in the country: the convergence of a severe housing crisis with the largest jail system in the United States. The jail system—dispersed across seven major facilities—maintains an average daily population of approximately 12,500 individuals. In 2024 alone, LA County released more than 62,000 people from jail,⁴ creating significant pressure on the County's housing and service systems. This large-scale reentry was compounded by almost a third of incarcerated individuals identifying as homeless, with people aged 26–34 accounting for a disproportionately high percentage (Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1. Proportion of LA County Jail Population Reporting Homelessness, 2024

Group	% of Overall Population	% of Homeless Population	Disparity
Male	89.5%	86.9%	-2.6%
Female	10.5%	13.1%	+2.6%
Hispanic	55.0%	52.8%	-2.2%
Black	29.0%	29.7%	+0.7%
White	13.0%	14.2%	+1.2%
Other	3.0%	3.2%	+0.2%
18 to 25	10.5%	12.4%	+1.9%
26 to 34	22.5%	37.2%	+14.7%
35 to 39	13.6%	17.9%	+4.3%
40 to 44	11.0%	13.2%	+2.2%
45 & Older	18.1%	19.3%	+1.2%

Source: Custody Division Population Year End Review, 2024

Further analysis of intersecting subgroups (race, gender, and age) show the following:

- **Young adult Hispanic and Black males (particularly ages 26 to 34)** are consistently *overrepresented* in the homeless population relative to their representation in the jail population as a whole.

- **Older Hispanic males (age 45 and above)** appear *underrepresented* among individuals reporting homelessness.
- **Other demographic subgroups** show relatively small differences. Their proportion in the population of people reporting homelessness generally aligns with their representation in the overall jail population.

28%

Individuals in custody in the LA County Jail in 2024 identifying as homeless⁴

18%

Individuals who were street homeless spending one or more night in jail in 2024

These analyses suggest two important points: First, homelessness affects individuals across *all* demographic groups—there were not substantial disparities across racial or ethnic lines overall. Second, where there are disparities, **they are concentrated among younger men of color**, underscoring the potential importance of tailored prevention and reentry efforts. And while the observed overrepresentation ranges from approximately 2.5 to 3 percentage points, in the context of a large jail system, these differences translate into substantial numbers of individuals affected.

"Housing is one of the biggest factors that determines recidivism. We know this...the number one need is always housing."

—Justice Care and Opportunities Department (JCOD) staff

Housing Complexities Specifically for Individuals with Mental Health Challenges and Substance Use

When individuals have mental health or substance use disorders, accessing appropriate housing is often much more complex. Not only do these individuals face barriers as a result of criminogenic factors—housing them requires options that provide the right level of clinical support as well. The LA County Department of Health Services (DHS) uses an assessment from P0 to P4 to classify the level of care needs related to mental illness. A January 2023 estimate found that **12%** of the LA County jail population has a designation of P3 or P4,⁵ or those with the most significant needs.

44% Individuals in the LA County Jail in 2024 receiving mental health treatment⁴

As described below, the county has robust programming to transition the P3/P4 population from jail into therapeutic, community-based care. This includes diversion programs, development of secure treatment beds, and long-term housing solutions.⁶ Note that in this context, “diversion” refers to programs and interventions that move individuals with behavioral health needs out of the criminal justice system and into community-based treatment and housing, rather than keeping them in jail or prison custody.

Individuals with more moderate impairments, including depression, PTSD, anxiety, and cognitive limitations, however, may be falling through the cracks. From 2015–2022, the percentage of the jail population with mental health needs of any type rose from 22 percent to 41 percent.⁷ Most of these individuals are too clinically stable to qualify for secured beds and diversion programs but may still struggle to secure and maintain housing. Importantly, mental health impairments may also limit work opportunities and impact social stability, both of

which can place these individuals at greater risk of losing their housing.

“[Individuals with less significant mental health challenges] don’t fall into any of those buckets... there’s not a lot for them. A safe, affirming, welcoming space would be key.”

–LA Nonprofit leader

Housing Challenges Across Populations

Providing housing at the time of jail release includes a set of persistent challenges that cut across nearly all adult populations. While some programs have ways to mitigate these, the issues remain widespread. The following summary reflects insights from County agencies, community-based organizations serving the reentry population, and individuals with lived experience of incarceration.

Housing Availability and Affordability

- Affordable housing is scarce, and even more so for individuals with certain criminal histories, such as sex offenses, arson, and production of methamphetamine.
- Available housing is not evenly distributed, with fewer options in outlying areas and more options in the central part of the city.
- For some individuals, the desire to avoid areas of former gang or illegal activity and safety concerns about returning to those neighborhoods further limits housing options.

Pre-Release Planning Gaps

- Release often occurs without adequate notice, including after hours or on weekends, and without any notification to organizations that are working with the individual.
- Release dates can change without warning, leaving service providers unable to coordinate housing or meet people at the point of exit.
- Jail In-Reach programs exist but staffing limitations means that the depth of service for each individual is constrained, and lack of

continuity between in-reach and reentry staff results in disjointed or inefficient processes.

- Individuals with lived experience expressed frustration that they could not begin the housing application process while still incarcerated, delaying their ability to access stable housing immediately upon release.

Program Eligibility and Program Fit

- Housing programs may require a set of identification and legal documents that take time to procure, if at all possible, and are difficult to resolve while in custody.
- While programs may be available to support individuals with more significant mental health needs, many people have mild/moderate challenges that impede functioning but which may not be addressed without special programming.
- Navigating systems like CalFresh or General Relief (GR) requires documentation and time, delaying access to these benefits that support housing stability.

There are additional barriers that shape the housing landscape for individuals returning from incarceration, including transportation limitations, lack of employment support, and insufficient housing options for families or people with specialized needs. While not exhaustive, the points above provide useful context to understand the current landscape of reentry offices and programs.

Key LA County Offices Focused on Housing for Reentry Populations

The current approach to the reentry population in LA County is a shared responsibility primarily between two offices: The Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR)—which sits within DHS—and the Justice Care and Opportunities Department (JCOD)—an independent department that began operations in November 2022.

The Office of Diversion and Reentry emerged in 2015 as DHS began expanding into homelessness

Measure J

“Care First Community Investment”

Approved by LA County voters in 2020, Measure J/CFCI mandates appropriation of at least 10% of the County’s locally generated, unrestricted general fund revenue towards direct community investments and alternatives to incarceration. These funds cannot be used for law enforcement, carceral systems, or courts. Full funding took place in June 2024.

services, recognizing the clear link between health and housing. With the creation of JCOD in 2022, ODR took on responsibility for the most acute and high-need individuals with mental health and substance use issues, providing clinical support and diversion aspects of jail-based and reentry services. ODR has a hybrid model of delivery in which psychiatrists, nurses, psychologists, and social workers deliver clinical services, while contracting with nonprofit organizations to provide case management and housing services. ODR is funded through a combination of local and state sources: AB 109 (California’s Public Safety Realignment Act), Proposition 47 (Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act), SB 678 (the California Community Corrections Performance Incentives Act), and Measure J (Care First and Community Investments, or CFCI). ODR also receives supplemental county appropriations and has pursued Medi-Cal reimbursement, Incompetent to Stand Trial (IST) Solutions grants, and other state and philanthropic funding.

Whereas ODR now primarily focuses on individuals with high acuity mental health needs, JCOD is responsible for broader reentry services that support the majority of the jail population. JCOD’s programs are designed to promote successful community reintegration through

services that address economic mobility, workforce development, education attainment, and housing stability. JCOD's financial support has come from a combination of federal, state and local funds. JCOD does receive county funds, but braids these with state realignment and grant funds and experiences greater instability of funding, which has generated concern within the advocacy community.^{8,9}

In addition to ODR and JCOD, **the Probation Department** supports housing, particularly through court-based diversion and reentry programs. Recent turmoil and turnover within the Probation Department (namely, multiple scandals related to orchestrating “gladiator fights” among juveniles and sexual assault, and the subsequent bill to delegate partial duties of the Probation Department to other county entities¹⁰) have made this office a less central partner for ODR and JCOD, and many community organizations noted that they do not have a clear understanding of current Probation operations. Within DHS, **Housing for Health (HFH)** has a set of programs to address homelessness by integrating housing, health care, and supportive services for people with complex needs. HFH serves as the lead public agency overseeing the Flexible Housing Subsidy Pool (FHSP)—a key resource to permanently house people with complex medical issues experiencing homelessness who use the County health system. A nonprofit, Brilliant Corners, is responsible for day-to-day operations of the FHSP. ODR relies on HFH's resources and often uses HFH's supportive housing units for its participants. JCOD also refers clients to Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and uses HFH's resources. **The LA County Department of Public Health (DPH) Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC)** is the central hub for substance use disorder (SUD) in LA County and operates several programs related to the justice-involved population.

Housing-Focused Programs and Services

LA County has an extensive set of programs and services for the reentry population covering education, employment, and workforce development; physical and mental health; expungement; and accessing identification documents. **All these services support housing stability and prevent homelessness.** This section further explores the housing-specific programming under ODR and JCOD.

Office of Diversion and Reentry

ODR programs focus on providing permanent and lifelong care for the approximately 1,500 individuals whom DHS identifies as P3/P4, typically with diagnoses of schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, and Bipolar I.

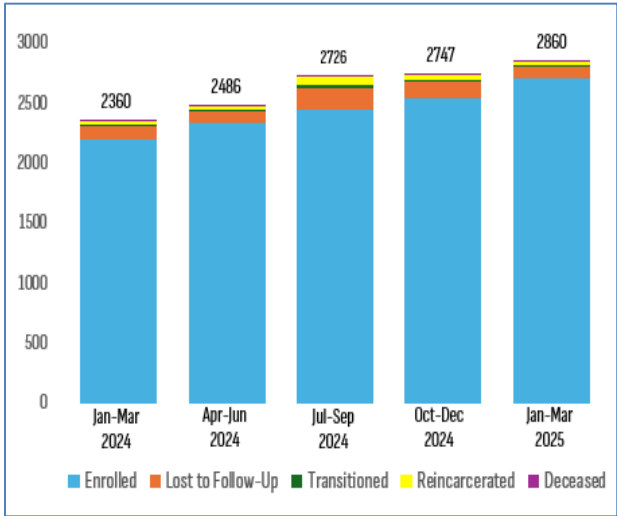
ODR Housing. This pretrial diversion and PSH program is ODR's most well-known service, dating back a decade. It is available to individuals charged with felony offenses and significant mental health and/or substance use needs and includes three components:

- 1) Jail-based clinical services while preparing for release
- 2) Enhanced treatment that includes assessments and medication
- 3) Immediate interim housing that leads to PSH, provided through the FHSP

Clients are ordered by the court into the program and—when released from jail—placed directly into ODR's care for two years. After that period, participation is voluntary but ODR staff report that most clients stay engaged and continue to access services. All clients receive intensive case management with a designated provider supporting the transition across health, mental health, SUD, and housing. To ensure that there is no gap in accessing psychotropic medication at the time of release, ODR contracts with psychiatrists directly until the individual is stabilized, at which time their care may transfer to the Department of Mental Health.

For housing, the program contracts with both project-based housing (constituting about 80 percent of placements) and scattered permanent housing for the remainder. An analysis of a subset of participants from 2016–2019 found that 91 percent had stable housing after 6 months and 74 percent had stable housing after 12 months.¹¹ While the specific reasons for this drop off are not fully known, participants had high rates of mental health and substance use, and this may be a factor. Throughout 2024 and the first quarter of 2025, enrollment averaged 93 percent and only about 5 percent of participants were lost to follow up or reincarcerated (Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2. ODR Housing Outcomes, 2024–2025



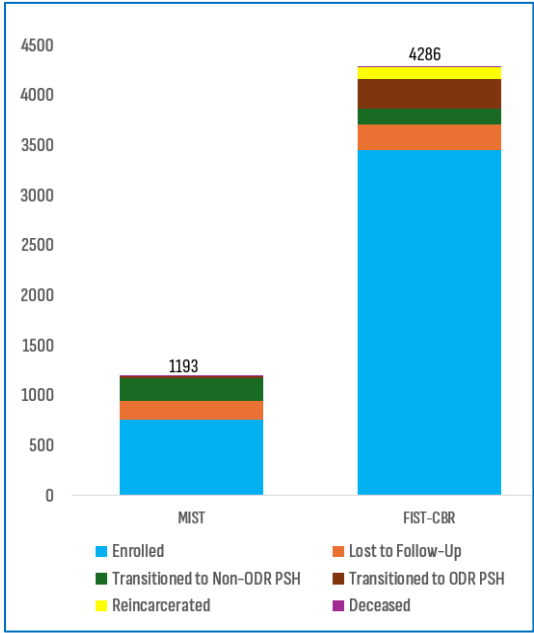
Source: ODR Housing Program Data, June 9, 2025

The ODR Housing program has a capacity of about 3,500 at any given time. Currently, there are vacancies since access to the program is dependent on cases moving quickly through the courts. As the bottleneck of cases waiting for judicial review lessens in the next 6–12 months, the program will need to expand, given the low attrition rate.

ODR Diversion Programs. ODR operates two competency-based diversion programs for those with misdemeanors (MIST CBR) and felonies (FIST–CBR) who are determined incompetent to stand trial (IST). These programs divert individuals into community-based rehabilitation and housing

with the goal of competency restoration, both emphasizing treatment and stabilization in clinical settings. While the program outcomes of these programs are not quite as strong as ODR Housing (see Exhibit 3), in 2024 and the first quarter of 2025, MIST lost only 16 percent of participants to follow up or reincarceration, while FIST–CBR stood at 9 percent.

Exhibit 3. MIST/FIST Outcomes, 2024–2025



Source: ODR Housing Program Data, June 9, 2025

While not directly the focus of this brief, diversion programs for people at risk of incarceration could be considered an even more upstream approach to homelessness prevention, given the revolving door between incarceration and homelessness. ODR’s **Let Everyone Advance with Dignity/Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD)** program is based on a national model of non-punitive diversion. In 2024, 1,185 individuals enrolled in the program, an increase of approximately 20 percent compared to 2023. Only 1 percent were reincarcerated or lost to follow up.¹² ODR also operates a program to divert pregnant women from jail—the **Maternal Health Program**—which involves specialized interim housing that enables women to reside with their children. Ultimately, these participants also move into PSH.

Exhibit 4. Overview of ODR Programs

	ODR Housing	MIST	FIST-CBR	LEAD	Maternal Health
Population	Serious mental health and/or medical needs (Identified as P3 or P4)	Misdemeanor defendants found Incompetent to Stand Trial (IST)	Felony defendants found IST	People at high risk of justice contact	Pregnant individuals or new mothers in jail or court system
Setting	Scattered-site and project-based housing with intensive support	Community-based rehabilitation and housing	Community-based restoration facilities	Case management and drop-in / community services	Community-based clinical and social services
Housing	Permanent supportive housing (PSH)	Interim to PSH	Structured residential, bridging to stability	Shelter and housing support available via case managers	Supportive housing coordinated with services

ODR Programs: What Works

A major factor related to the ODR Housing program that respondents identified is that **funding is tied to the individual**, not the category of services. This allows for remarkable flexibility, enabling ODR to bring whatever support is needed to an individual client. The office can also develop programs as general needs emerge. For example, ODR observed that even providing transportation did not guarantee that a client would attend appointments, **so they created a program to embed nurses and clinical counselors onsite at interim housing locations**. As another example, the high acuity of the ODR population means individuals may need hospitalization at times, so ODR is initiating contracts with acute psychiatric hospitals to ensure timely access to beds.

A second key factor of the effectiveness of ODR programs is the clearly identified population, albeit narrowly focused on the highest acuity, in conjunction with providing high-intensity wraparound services. No other program in LA County offers this level of service for this population. Both county staff and community organizations acknowledge that, while costly, it is precisely the intensity of services that has been central to the program's success in keeping people housed.

"In the homeless services system, you have access to a certain set of resources. And if you got a housing voucher, you better hang onto that thing for dear life because you're never going to get another one again. In this program, if you lose your housing...it's OK. We have that flexibility to bring the resources to the client where they need to be. That has been the most impactful thing about the program."

—ODR Staff

Justice Care and Opportunities Department

Charged with serving the broad reentry population with either no identified mental health/substance use needs or those with lower acuity, JCOD works with thousands of individuals per year across all its programs. Housing is a key component. In 2024, the JCOD Justice Connect Support Center (a hotline that provides personalized assistance for those who are justice-involved) received 1,430 requests for housing. Other than requests for transportation, this need was higher than all other areas (e.g., employment/education, health, legal).¹³ Below are the JCOD programs that most directly include a housing component.

Emergency Housing: This program provides temporary housing for four weeks, with the

intention of moving individuals to JCOD's interim housing sites. Access to these beds is primarily through self-referral via the Justice Connect Support Center. An alternative entry to emergency housing is through a new **Pretrial Services Pilot** program, launched in June 2024. This program has navigators stationed at the Airport, Compton and Antelope Valley Courthouses to directly intercept individuals and link them to case management and in many cases, emergency housing. As of June 2025, JCOD has launched 67 Emergency Housing beds designated for this program.

Reentry Interim Housing. JCOD has a relatively small interim housing program, consisting of 181 beds available for approximately 9 months while individuals are looking for longer-term housing. This program is available to single men and women and the LGBTQ population, and individuals accessing these beds are co-enrolled in JCOD programs that have a case management component (RICMS, POWR) described below. All current interim housing locations are located in Service Planning Area (SPA) 6. Both county and community organization respondents emphasized the shortage of interim housing for the reentry population as a major limitation to preventing homelessness, given the high number of individuals leaving jail each day.

Of note, individuals who are in emergency housing and interim housing are still considered homeless; these two placements are only temporary and while keeping an individual from being unsheltered, they are not preventing homelessness.

"Every time we get a new [interim housing] bed, someone is right there to take it... by the time we contact the person to come in, the bed is already gone."—JCOD Staff

JCOD is also launching the **Warm Landing Place** program, across from the downtown Men's Central Jail. This will connect individuals with

services immediately after release and includes about 50 beds to provide immediate shelter to people with no access to housing.

Reentry Intensive Case Management Services (RICMS). Launched nearly a decade ago, RICMS is the "backbone" program of JCOD, providing coordinated, community-based support to individuals returning from jail or prison as well as those with a justice-involved background. RICMS connects participants with trained community health workers (many of whom have lived experience with incarceration or housing instability) who provide case management and navigation services for housing, health care, treatment programs, and employment. JCOD currently contracts with 24 organizations to provide these wraparound services for approximately one year. RICMS is funded by Proposition 47, AB 109, and LA County Net County Cost revenue.

*"The only requirement for RICMS is that they've been justice impacted in their adult life, so that's a really great thing because we can open up our doors to helping as many people as possible without limitations."
—LA Nonprofit Leader*

The program is available to individuals with justice involvement at any point, though most historically entered from the community rather than directly from jail. Between 2018 and 2021, participants enrolled while still incarcerated were much less likely to engage in the program than those enrolled after release (13 percent vs. 30 percent).¹⁴ One reason was that there was no single, streamlined process for jail-based enrollment, which made in-reach more difficult. With the creation of JCOD as the centralized agency for non-clinical justice-involved individuals, the county is increasing capacity to complete RICMS enrollment before release. As a result, a larger share of participants may enter the program directly from jail, which was 39 percent in the most recent year. In 2023–24, RICMS served over 7,200 individuals.¹⁵

Providing Opportunities for Women in Reentry. (POWR): A gender-specific program offering the same services as RICMS specifically for women on adult felony probation and their children, POWR emphasizes trauma-informed services that also address experiences of sexual and physical assault.

Developing Opportunities and Reentry Solutions (DOORS): This program provides co-location of service providers within a probation office (currently in two locations) and has multiple service providers within the same space to make it easier for individuals to access staff and services. DOORS connects participants to resources, including housing support, but does not operate housing sites or provide intensive case management.

Breaking Barriers. This is a time-limited housing subsidy program operated by Brilliant Corners in partnership with JCOD, first launched in 2015. With original funding from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, support has continued through a Board of State and Community Corrections grant, CFCI funds, and ongoing AB 109 allocations. The program is designed for individuals with a history of justice involvement who are employed or have the potential to become employed, with the goal of transitioning participants to independent housing within 12 to 24 months.

Currently, JCOD screens individuals for program eligibility based on housing instability and employment readiness. Employment or employment readiness is one of the most important eligibility factors, since participants gradually contribute more towards their rent (starting at 30 percent of their income, increasing to 50 percent over a year).

After JCOD refers an individual to Brilliant Corners, staff at the organization conduct additional assessments, including use of the triage tool used in Coordinated Entry Systems, the VI-SPDAT, to assess vulnerability and

potential prioritization for housing. Given the importance of maintaining employment, the team also reviews any factors that may disrupt this, including significant mental health issues. The program leverages the FHSP for housing acquisition and landlord incentives. Breaking Barriers is not part of the PSH system, but provides targeted stabilization support through case management, tenant support, and employment services through the nonprofit Chrysalis.

Since its launch a decade ago, Breaking Barriers has continued to evolve, and outcome data are not available to reflect the current structure. The program serves approximately 200 people, making it relatively small in the LA County service landscape.

JCOD Programs: What Works

Within JCOD's broader set of programs, staff identified several elements as key drivers of effectiveness. First, most of JCOD's programs rely on community health workers or case managers who are considered "credible messengers" due to their own lived experience with incarceration or housing instability. This lived experience helps build trust and engagement.

Second, JCOD partners with trusted community-based organizations, some of which have been supporting reentry in LA County even before ODR was established. These organizations bring deep relationships and localized knowledge that enhance service delivery.

Third, JCOD has established mechanisms to obtain and incorporate community and participant feedback, such as through JCOD focus groups, which help ensure that services remain responsive and aligned with the needs of those they are intended to serve.

“The benefit of having the referral come straight from JCOD is that they have their own electronic database and oversees all of the reentry programs in LA County... it has been a really good addition having JCOD on our team, since they are really the hub for anything reentry within Los Angeles County.”

–Breaking Barriers Staff

For the Breaking Barriers program specifically, one of the factors that staff believe is both effective and unique is the rent contribution model, which is based on a percentage of the participant’s income rather than of the total rent. This approach allows for greater flexibility as participants’ earnings change over time and is more equitable, particularly for people with more limited income during the reentry period. Breaking Barriers staff believe that this approach reduces the risk of housing instability caused by a sudden increase in rent burden.

Other Programs

Within LA County, there are also programs outside ODR and JCOD that support housing needs of individuals at the time of exit from jail or prison. These programs support the efforts of JCOD and ODR and fill in gaps for certain populations.

Client Engagement and Navigation Services (CENS). Operated by eight community-based organizations under SAPC, CENS conducts prerelease screenings within facilities to identify individuals with SUD needs. CENS providers are co-located in probation offices and courthouses to allow engagement with clients during the transition out of custody. CENS staff facilitate connections to housing resources and other critical services such as mental health care and case management.

Substance Treatment and Re-entry Transition Community (START). Also a program under SAPC, START is an in-custody diversion program that allows individuals with moderate to severe SUD

to complete their sentence through a contracted residential treatment provider. Case management and reentry planning also includes housing navigation support.

DHS Housing for Health — Recuperative Care and Stabilization Housing. While not specifically focused on the reentry population, this program receives referrals from Correctional Health Services jail in-reach programs. It offers short-term housing with medical oversight for individuals who are medically vulnerable or recovering from illness or injury.

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) B7 Bridge Housing. B7 Bridge Housing provides 24-hour temporary housing to individuals 18 or older who have exited jail, prison, or juvenile detention within the past 60 days. Criteria for eligibility includes either presently experiencing homelessness (if exit from jail/prison has already occurred) or anticipated homelessness at exit. Bridge housing is available in selected SPAs, provided by community organizations. Services include a bed, meals, case management, and resources to obtain permanent housing.

Homecoming Project. First started in 2018 in Oakland, the organization Impact Justice expanded this program to Los Angeles in 2022 with a \$15 million legislative earmark.¹⁶ The program places people leaving prison into homes of family or community members for approximately six months, providing the host family with a monthly stipend as an incentive. The program provides support services to participants, including case management and teaching problem-solving skills.

Combined, these programs illustrate how a range of departments and philanthropic partnerships are contributing to housing stability for people leaving incarceration.

Other Programs: What Works

Representatives of more than one community-based organization cited the FHSP as a critically important tool within the framework of services

to prevent homelessness. Past Abt Global reports for the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation have elaborated on the strengths of FHSP.^{17,18} They also noted seeing the gap in programs where it is not used, such as in a program that is no longer operational, called D2 Jail In Reach.

“One really key thing: the FHSP totally eliminates the barriers for individuals getting into housing. Just totally eliminates the barriers.” –LA Nonprofit Leader

Opportunities for Program Improvement and Expansion

In addition to two departments specifically focused on the reentry population, LA County has multiple offices and departments with relevant services and dozens of nonprofit organizations and community-based initiatives that serve individuals with justice involvement. Many programs have been in place for almost a decade, allowing ample time to evolve and grow. At the same time, the county is grappling with an incarcerated population with increased mental health needs over time⁷ and an ongoing housing crisis.

Areas for potential improvement, based on the interviews and review of data conducted in this project, can be grouped into six areas.

① Increased and differentiated interim housing

Virtually every respondent identified interim housing as a critical support for individuals leaving jail, and also noted their scarcity. JCOD staff reported intense competition for these beds and described the substantial effort involved in identifying eligible participants, securing their acceptance, and ensuring that a bed that will still be available when the person is ready.

DHS staff added that interim housing is too “cookie cutter” right now, with not enough differentiation to meet the needs of different populations. For example, individuals with high levels of trauma, paranoid schizophrenia and other challenging mental health conditions may need individual rooms. An interim housing “plus” model, which ODR is starting to develop, could include a slightly higher level of care with more services on-site than a typical interim housing setting.

② Increase housing support for selected populations

The “JCOD population”: Across the organizations interviewed, there was broad agreement that individuals with serious mental illness require intensive and specialized services, such as those provided by ODR. At the same time, many noted that the “general” reentry population, those managed by JCOD, lack sufficient housing support. Lower acuity individuals and those who are not chronically homeless are—as one respondent observed—“falling way down on the list” for resources like time-limited subsidy programs such as rapid rehousing.

An ideal pathway for someone exiting jail might consist of four weeks of emergency housing, co-enrollment in the RICMS program, a transition to interim housing for 9–12 months, and ultimately entry into permanent housing. If permanent housing cannot be secured at that point, a time-limited subsidy program (using the Breaking Barriers model) could offer continued support.

Multiple respondents noted that RICMS does not have housing subsidies attached, contrasting it to the Housing for Health Intensive Case Management Services (ICMS) program which does not exist without a subsidy. Given the significant housing needs of reentry and justice-involved populations, this lack of dedicated housing support was viewed as a major obstacle to stable housing for individuals at the time of exit from jail.

"I know it sounds oversimplified, but we need dedicated resources not only for the population with serious mental illness or addiction, not only for the very narrow AB 109 track, not only for the lifers. But also for people who for economic or social reasons, just don't have a place to land. And while we're building that, we need to make sure we have a streamlined pathway for them to access the existing mainstream system."
-LA Nonprofit leader

Women with children: One of the gaps identified through working with women in the POWR program is the opportunity for them to live in a substance use disorder recovery home without giving up custody of their children. In addition, there is currently not a clear model to support multi-generational housing for the reentry population, which would allow multiple members with justice involvement to stay together.

③ Address the mismatch in location of services and housing

The housing gap is more nuanced just needing "more" beds—it is also a matter of location. A substantial portion of the jail population is from District 2, encompassing South LA, Inglewood, and Compton. Developers have expressed interest in partnering with JCOD to expand housing in these areas, something that JCOD would welcome. However, JCOD currently lacks the mechanism and funding to pay for beds.

At the same time, some individuals originally from this area actively seek to relocate upon release to distance themselves from gang, drug, and other illegal or unsafe activity. Yet areas like the Antelope Valley, Pomona, and Long Beach have limited existing infrastructure and inventory for reentry housing, along with fewer community-based organizations to provide ongoing support.

"There are about a dozen programs across LA County doing some really comprehensive work, pre-release and post-release, and if we can just look at all the best parts of practices of each of those and take it to scale as a county, it would be amazing." -LA Nonprofit leader

④ Renew and expand jail in-reach activity and increase access to mainstream services

Best practice for effective services involves organizations making **early connections** and **conducting early planning** (e.g., 60 days before anticipated release) to identify needs and begin preparing for release. In addition, having a **consistent caseworker to follow from pre-release through post-release** is another well-established practice. LA County previously operated the D2 Jail In Reach program, and there are many pre-release programs across the County operated "by small organizations, at a small scale," as described by one community organization leader. However, these in-reach programs are not happening at scale. This recommendation echoes a July 2024 recommendation from LAHSA to the LA City Council to reinvest in and expand jail in-reach programming.

"We know if there's an opportunity for the organization doing the pre-release work to be the same folks that are engaged with people when they are released, that continuity makes a world of difference." -LA Nonprofit leader

Relatedly, while anyone exiting jail is theoretically eligible for mainstream housing programs, navigating that system independently is very difficult for most people, particularly in the chaotic period of initial jail exit. One recommendation that emerged from this project is to have a dedicated liaison to work specifically with the pre-release team and facilitate a match with interim housing beds. (This type of position

already exists for exits from hospitals, including for those who have previous justice involvement).

5 Invest in Case Managers

Case managers play a central role in many intensive and wraparound programs, serving as the key coordinator. When effective, they can be life-changing. Yet multiple respondents (including those with lived experience) noted that case managers are not always able to be effective. This is understandable: navigating services for someone at risk of homelessness is complex, and even more so for individuals with justice involvement. These individuals often face exclusions from certain housing programs, denial based on background checks, and bias from landlords. Effective support requires not only housing expertise but also familiarity with probation and parole systems, physical and behavioral health, public benefits, and employment resources. Developing expertise takes time, yet case managers are often underpaid and may leave a position for a salary increase of just \$1 or \$2 elsewhere.

"I feel like some of them just bullshit you. Not saying everybody does, but I feel like some of them they're not out there advocating, they don't do their job."

–Person With Lived Experience (PWLE)

To address these challenges, one primary short-term approach is to raise the salary of case workers to improve retention; however, investment in the broader ecosystem may be even more critical. Case managers also cannot be effective if the services they are meant to engage (housing, mental health, employment) are inaccessible, overburdened or difficult to navigate.

"She said, 'hey, I know right now it's crazy for you... but like, I got you. I'm going to help you to get your life together.' And she did above and beyond. Like, she literally changed the trajectory of my life." –PWLE

6 Develop a user-friendly resource guide that includes housing-specific resources

Within the complex web of county offices and programs, it is not surprising that virtually every respondent noted the challenge of even identifying what services and programs are available. While the resource service 211 LA contains an extensive amount of information, it lacks flexibility in searching and filtering. Members of the Los Angeles Regional Reentry Partnership (LARRP) Housing Committee noted that there is no consolidated resource or guide that provides a map of housing-focused support for the reentry population. A March 2024 Sequential Intercept Mapping exercise¹⁹ identified this same need, as did a LAHSA report on Jail In-Reach programs submitted to the City Council in July 2024.²⁰ A more user-friendly resource would benefit both individuals looking for specific programs and organizations trying to understand where they may be able to refer individuals for additional services.

"Maybe, if there was a packet built, like a packet of resources, that could be handed when they leave the facility." –PWLE

"I ended up trying to find out information... I got like three, four different numbers. And then people just referred me to different numbers, not linking me to anywhere, to be honest."

–PWLE

Conclusion

It is common for individuals to be released from jail with little more than a bus token or a taxi voucher—and no plan for where they will sleep that night. Many face enormous odds: no safe place to sleep, no access to treatment for mental health or medical care, and no clear path forward. This cycle of incarceration, homelessness and rearrest is deeply entrenched, nationwide and also in LA County.

In recent years, LA County has made important strides to support individuals at risk of homelessness following incarceration, including the creation of a dedicated agency—JCOD—to lead these efforts. Programs like RICMS, Breaking Barriers and the ODR Housing Program offer clear models for reaching people with timely support at the time of the release. However, even the most effective programs face limitations, including accurately timing support to when an individual is released, a shortage of interim housing, interim housing that is sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of different populations, high staff turnover, and in building programs to support individuals at risk of homelessness, and now has a new department, JCOD, to lead these efforts. Many of the programs highlighted in this report, including RICMS, Breaking Barriers, and the ODR Housing Program, offer models for how to reach people with timely support at the time of exit. However, even the most effective models can be constrained by challenges such as the lack of interim housing, workforce turnover, and limited options for people with certain circumstances.

To continue to address the homeless prevention needs of the reentry population, stronger connections are needed between housing, health and the justice system, strengthening the coordination both within the County systems and between County agencies and the strong nonprofit sector. The County already has many of the tools it needs; the next step is to ensure that these are aligned, accessible and sustained, so that support is not left to chance and increasingly greater numbers of individuals leaving jail are safely and securely housed.

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- Los Angeles Regional Reentry Partnership (LARRP)

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