Housing: A Basic Human Right for Everyone!

A special thanks to our Presenting Sponsor:
Susan Gunderman, Community Partners in Action  
Deborah Rogala, Community Partners in Action  
Luis Mattei, Formerly Incarcerated College Graduates Network  

A special thanks to our Presenting Sponsor:
Housing
A Basic Human Right

Susan Gunderman, Program Operations Director, CPA
Deborah Rogala, Director of Operations, CPA
Luis Mattei, Subject Matter Expert
Who We Are...

As a human services nonprofit (founded in 1875), we are dedicated to serving and advocating for adults and youth in the criminal justice system throughout Connecticut.

We are guided by our core values that all people should be treated with human dignity & respect.

We believe people can change and deserve a second chance.

We believe people have a right to a decent standard of living.
Some Hard Facts...

- As of December 2022, there were 89 shelter programs that operate in CT, representing a total of 2,537 beds. (Dec. 12, 2022, Hartford Courant)

- More than 3,500 individuals had both experienced homelessness and an encounter with the Dept. of Corrections (DOC) since 2016.

- Most people with a history of incarceration were homeless before going to prison.
  - Sixty-nine percent of people were homeless prior to incarceration.
  - Thirty-one percent of people became homeless after incarceration. (CT Coalition to End Homelessness - CCEH)

- Fourteen percent of people went from incarceration to immediate homelessness. (DOC)
Our Model for Reentry Welcome Centers (RWC)

• CPA’s Hartford and Waterbury Reentry Welcome Centers (RWC) offer a centralized hub of services for individuals who find themselves involved in the justice system. The RWCs are a place where individuals returning home from incarceration feel welcome and receive a multitude of support.

• The Centers provide long-term case management, on-going support and connection/referrals to essential support services.

• Center staff work closely with DOC to ensure all participants are transported directly to the center on their day of release to the community. Everyone that has been incarcerated is eligible for services.
Collaboration and Referrals

RWCs Resource Hub

More than 40+ community partners and organizations and programs serving people formerly incarcerated.

Essential Human Services

Helping people navigate the maze of resource providers for a place to live, a decent paying job, accessing health services, education etc.

We work with partners to provide:

Basic needs; securing identification; housing support; recovery & harm reduction; mental and physical healthcare; vocational training & employment; support groups; computer and communication access.
RWC Hard Facts...

- Eighty percent-plus of participants tracked at intake were housing insecure.

- Addressing the intersection of incarceration and homelessness could reduce overall rates of sheltered homelessness by 20%. (CCEH)

- People with a history of incarceration constitute a large portion of the homeless population in CT.

- Assisting people with their housing needs prior to their release reduces overall rates of homelessness and the level of vagrancy associated with people living on the streets.
Needs of the Reentry Population

- The vast majority of people incarcerated in Connecticut prisons have substance use and/or mental health disorders.

- More than 75% of people in prisons are aged 45+, who are at heightened risk of mortality due to adverse health.

- People formerly incarcerated constitute a large proportion of the homeless population.

- People who are living unsheltered are at greater risk of ending up in an emergency room, dying of an overdose, or committing new crimes as a desperate means of survival.
Housing... It Matters

- Living unsheltered puts people at greater risk of ending up in the emergency room, especially during winter months, or may lead them to commit new crimes as a means of survival.

- **Housing is a primary need for participants of the Centers.** Whenever possible, arrangements are made for shelter prior to a person’s reentry to ensure no one discharges to homelessness.

- **The RWC partners with the CCEH, local Coordinated Access Networks (CAN) throughout CT, and Journey Home to ensure shelter is available for participants experiencing homelessness.**
Transitional Housing Options

A safe haven for women...

- Houses up to 6 women who are transitioning from prison back into their community.
- Residents participate in services provided by the Hartford Reentry Welcome Center.

...helping & empowering women like Pierlette Jones.

Pierlette came to Mart's House to stabilize, work, and rebuild her life after her release from York Correctional Facility in Niantic.
Transitional Housing Options


- Capacity for up to 9 men, with each having their own bedroom and sharing common living spaces.

- A furnished home funded by the City of Hartford through Opioid Settlement Funds.

- The goal for men residing at Gordon’s Place is to stabilize, save money, and eventually move into independent living.
Replacing Stigma & Stereotypes with Humanizing Language

01 Criminal, Convict, or Inmate
Person or individual convicted of a crime. Person involved in the criminal justice system. Person currently incarcerated.

02 Juvenile Delinquent
Young person involved in the justice system.

03 Sex Offender
Person convicted of a sex offense.

Source: FHI 360 nonprofit organization, Restorative Language Guide
Our 2024 Advocacy Priorities

H.B. 5242: An Act Concerning the Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record on Housing Opportunities...

...was voted out of committee but did not progress further because the State Legislature decided not to alter the FY 24/25 budget that was adopted last year.

As a result, the decision froze many bills with a fiscal note, including this one.

However, we are now better prepared to move this bill forward in the next session.
**Landlord Engagement Ideas & Solutions**

**Landlord Incentives**
- Identify Flex Fund
- Invest in Landlord mediation staff to support property owners
- Advocate for tax credits

**Tips for Landlords**
- Identify and engage Landlord associations & advisory boards
- Become familiar with Landlord concerns and existing stigmas
- Share community resources that are available for landlords and tenants
- Offer trainings and increase Landlord awareness of the role they play in decreasing homelessness
- Promote honesty and transparency with landlords
Landlord Engagement Ideas & Solutions

Tenant Certificates

- Develop tenant training curriculum and certifications of tenancy
- Support lease education (understanding your lease)
- Improved Landlord & Tenant communication
- Tenant “Do’s and Don’ts”

- Natural Supports / exploring how they can continue to be of support
- How to include them into the plan as on-going supports. Most want to know what they can do to support, and they want to know an end date.
Take Aways

- Releases of Information
- Data Sharing
- Updated HMIS and OPM Data Match

- **Court House Calls to Action (pre-trial)**
  - Continue conversation to streamline the process to connect people to resources including pre-trial and time-served individuals.
  - Housing focused conversations early on.
  - Pro-active discharge planning.
  - Community Connections Liaison. Re-entry Plan of Homelessness to include people reentering the community from prison.

- Consider changing the definition to consider DOC population / incarceration time.

- **Upstream Discharge Planning** (Discharge Road Map)
  - Coordination of continuum of care
  - Connections to employment
  - Connections to mental health & substance abuse providers
What is Restorative Justice?

- **Restorative practices is a field within the social sciences** that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities.

- **A tool to guide people to have more equitable practices** that will lead you through a process to ensure that we are having healthy and equitable conversations at all levels.

- **A Shared Agreement** founded on **three core elements:**
  - Encounter
  - Restore
  - Repair
Thanks for listening...

Let’s stay in touch...

- Deb Rogala
  DRogala@cpa-ct.org

- Sue Gunderman
  SGunderman@cpa-ct.org

- Luis Mattei
  lumattei11@gmail.com

www.cpa-ct.org
Thank you for attending this workshop!

A special thanks to our Presenting Sponsor: