



National Alliance to
END HOMELESSNESS

Second Chance Act
(H.R. 1593 / S. 1060) Summary
November, 2007

The Second Chance Act is federal legislation with bipartisan support that aims to reduce recidivism and help states and communities to better address the growing population of prisoners returning to communities. It would reauthorize the Re-Entry Demonstration project with an enhanced focus on jobs, housing, substance abuse treatment / mental health, and children and families.

Each year, nearly 650,000 people are released from U.S. prisons, and over seven million are released from jails. People exiting prisons or jails are at increased risk of homelessness. More than 10 percent of those coming in and out of prisons and jail are homeless in the months before their incarceration. Shelter use, both before incarceration and after release, is associated with an increased risk of return to prison. Many former prisoners need help accessing affordable housing and services to help them reenter their community.

Housing is a key part of any reentry strategy, and it is addressed in a number of ways in the Second Chance Act:

- Under the state grants program, **housing activities are eligible uses** of program funds, from providing housing directly to assisting people in securing housing from the private market or other housing programs. The bill authorizes \$40 million per year for these grants, and it will be up to the states that apply how much of that will be used for housing.
- The bill reestablishes authority to place federal prisoners in halfway houses and other residential situations during the latter part of their terms, as well as encouraging residential substance abuse treatment upon release.
- Another eligible use of funds is strengthening the capacity of prisoners' families to provide stable living situations – 80 percent of people leaving prison live with their families upon release.
- Housing is to be addressed in the strategic plan required of each state receiving funding.
- Housing is one of the performance outcomes that each state receiving funding is required to monitor and report to the Justice Department.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development is a member of the newly created federal task force on reentry.

- Admissions issues in federal housing programs are among the barriers to successful reentry that are to be subject of a report to Congress by the federal task force.

- Housing is to be included as one of the variables in a study of the characteristics of people who leave prison or jail and do not commit new crimes, to be carried out by the National Institute of Justice.

In addition, the bill would establish a grant program to provide funding for nonprofit organizations to provide mentoring and transitional services to adult and juvenile offenders.