

Burlington Housing Authority
Offender Re-Entry Housing Program

Policy and Procedure Manual

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History

In late 2004, the Department of Corrections (DOC) entered into contracts with the Burlington and Winooski Community Justice Centers (CJC) to implement offender re-entry programs in both communities. The two CJsCs implemented a re-entry program targeted to assist serious and violent offenders returning to their respective communities. The Burlington program also included a subcontract with the Burlington Housing Authority (BHA) to engage a Housing Planner to work with a regional group to develop a Regional Re-Entry Housing Plan.

The Regional Re-Entry Housing Plan provided a strategic and targeted response to identified needs and demands. It was developed to meet community and offender needs in collaboration with a Regional Advisory Committee made up of municipal officials, law enforcement professionals, Corrections personnel, and service providers. The Advisory Committee met four times between December 2004 and July 2005 and endorsed the following Housing Plan at the end of that time:

Goals for the Plan:

- ✪ Increase the availability of appropriate housing for offenders returning to their communities;
- ✪ Integrate housing with services (housing needs to be more than “just beds”) as the majority of offenders have mental health, substance abuse, violence and/or sex offense issues;
- ✪ Create better notification to and collaboration with schools, landlords, and law enforcement;
- ✪ Create support for and accountability from returning offenders;
- ✪ Preserve existing support and mentoring programs;
- ✪ Raise awareness of the fact that all existing transitional housing beds and shelters are located in Burlington and seek to have new units more equitably dispersed across the region. Given public transportation limitations, the property should be close to bus service, which runs to/from Essex, Shelburne, South Burlington, Williston, and Winooski; and
- ✪ Strive for more flexible implementation funding. The additional costs associated with housing and supporting conditionally released offenders must be borne by the State, not local communities.

Indicators of successful offender reentry in the region:

- ✪ More safety and security for communities and offenders;
- ✪ More housing environments available to respond to offenders' varied needs including:
 - * Access to bus route or flexibility re: carpooling
 - * Supportive and sober environments; and
 - * Adequate support services;
- ✪ Motel rooms are not used to house re-entering offenders;
- ✪ Existing affordable housing units have been converted into properties that provide transitional beds for offenders;
- ✪ New rental assistance resources have been created to meet the needs of offenders;
- ✪ Offenders are not losing their housing due to minor sanctions for violations of reentry requirements; and
- ✪ A reduction in the number of Chittenden County offenders in prison due to the lack of available and appropriate housing.

Although the Plan had not yet been finalized, the Burlington and Winooski CJC's subcontracted with the BHA in January of 2005 to hire an Offender Re-Entry Housing Specialist (ORHS) with money from the DOC. This position provided advocacy and housing support for offenders returning to the larger community, as well as continued development of new transitional housing options.



Despite not having an active grant for a full calendar year, the ORHS placed 49 offenders, 25 with a housing subsidy and 24 without, and had contact

with nearly 100 offenders overall. Of those housed with a subsidy, most received subsidies because their name came to the top of the Section 8 waiting list, or through the Family Unification Voucher program, a fast-track Section 8 program that allowed those who met criteria to move to the top of the waitlist. Others were added to a family member's existing Section 8 household.

Although there are certain criminal record limitations for Section 8 eligibility, the only guidelines set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the agency

that oversees the program, are that the participant not be on the lifetime sex-offender registry (can be on the 10-year registry) and not have produced methamphetamines in his/her residence. All other eligibility limitations, including those based on criminal record, are devised by individual housing authorities. Within the BHA, if an ORHP applicant is otherwise eligible for Section 8, then the Director of Rental Assistance may overlook the criminal record under the assumption that the participant would be working with the program to become a more productive member of society. Regardless of housing subsidy, all ORHP program participants are required to sign a lease addendum (Appendices 8-9) if they are housed through that program.

After a year and a half of placing returning offenders in housing, ORHP staff noticed that more time was spent chasing late rent as a favor to landlords than finding new housing for program applicants. The program decided to work towards a treatment team model—desiring to collaborate closely with each participant’s Parole Officer (PO) as well as other treatment providers, in order to ensure appropriate support services are in place to help the participant maintain housing. With this goal in mind, the ORHP now also provides housing retention services, which include budgeting, relationship building with landlords and neighbors, life skills training, crisis prevention and resolution, as well as making referrals to other service providers when necessary.

In Vermont, the DOC requires their agency personnel (specifically probation officers) to approve the residences of all offenders released into the community under supervision. This ensures that he/she will not be released to wander the streets, live with the victim of his/her crime, or any other dangerous



situation. The DOC offers, “Transitional Housing Money,” approximately \$1000 in funding, to eligible offenders to help them get started; this can be for security deposit, first month’s rent, transitional housing program fees, etc.

The ORHS typically had been able to rely on Transitional Housing Money to help house reentering offenders at the beginning of their tenancy. However, the money allocated for fiscal year 2007 had been used up by the beginning of the year, and the DOC determined that most of the people who had utilized it had ended up returning to jail. The consensus from this study was that because the apartments secured for returning offenders were generally fair market rate, often too expensive to be maintained by someone just re-establishing themselves in the community. As a result, the DOC tightened their criteria for funding eligibility, and none of the housed ORHP program participants were able to access these funds in FY2008. The ORHS are currently looking to suggest better ways that DOC Transition Money could be spent with the goal of helping offenders maintain permanent housing.

Collaborators

Created in 1961, the **Burlington Housing Authority** is Vermont's oldest and largest municipally-based housing authority. BHA is governed by a five member Board of Commissioners, who are appointed by Burlington's Mayor. Most of the BHA’s funding is from HUD, which has rated the agency as a High Performer.

BHA’s mission is “to promote, provide, and preserve affordable housing in ways that encourage resident self-sufficiency and support healthy neighborhoods”. BHA strives to achieve this mission by successfully managing 500+ affordable apartments and 1,700 rental subsidies to families living in the BHA jurisdiction, which includes the City of Burlington and a number of surrounding communities.

The **Center for Community and Neighborhoods (CCAN)** is home to a broad spectrum of programs that improve the city of Burlington through community participation and citizen action. CCAN works to engage residents in partnership with the public and private sector. They work to shape municipal plans, allocate resources, respond to crime, resolve conflict, and improve neighborhoods.

The **Vermont State Department of Correction's** mission statement reads: "In partnership with the community, we support safe communities by providing leadership in crime prevention, repairing the harm done, addressing the needs of crime victims, ensuring offender accountability for criminal acts and managing the risk posed by offenders. This is accomplished through a commitment to quality services and continuous improvement while respecting diversity, legal rights, human dignity and productivity." Its vision is, "To be valued by the citizens of Vermont as a partner in the prevention, research, control and treatment of criminal behavior". The DOC values "Responsibility, Commitment, Integrity, Judgment, Creativity, Enthusiasm, and Compassion".

The **Community Justice Centers of Burlington and Winooski** each work with their respective communities to foster economic vitality; preserve and enhance neighborhoods, quality of life and the environment; and promote equity and opportunity for all Burlington and Winooski residents.

Vocational Rehabilitation Vermont's (VocRehabVermont) mission is, "to assist Vermonters with disabilities to find and maintain meaningful employment in their communities". VocRehabVermont is committed to facilitating successful, long-term relationships between employers and people with disabilities in Vermont. To do this, the agency works in close partnership with the Vermont Association of Business and Industry

Rehabilitation (VABIR). VocRehabVermont is also dedicated to the goal of ensuring equal access employment for all Vermonters, and meeting the needs of the Vermont business community.

The Vermont Association of Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation (VABIR) was established in 1979 and is dedicated to matching job seekers and employers within our community. With offices in various locations throughout the state of Vermont, VABIR provides free employment and consultation services to workers with disabilities and interested businesses.

HowardCenter is Vermont's largest private non-profit community mental health and human services provider. They serve over 15,000 people at 49 Vermont locations each year, and has been helping Vermonters since 1873 in an unbroken 132-year history of caring for the most vulnerable members of society. The evolution of HowardCenter reflects major changes in the way we treat people with mental illness, developmental disabilities, emotional crises and substance abuse issues.

HowardCenter is part of the essential fabric of the Burlington community and has helped lead the fight for mental health insurance parity; built a system of community inclusion vs. institutionalization; organized the state's first opiate-dependent methadone treatment center and, with State agencies and law-enforcement, proactively address a host of mental health.

Procedure

Referral Sources:

- ✪ Correctional Service Specialists (CSS), or caseworkers, in State Correctional Facilities
- ✪ Probation officers (PO's) at Burlington Probation



and Parole

- ✧ Other case managers or service providers (i.e. Dept of Labor, Vermont Children's Aid Society, HowardCenter's Safety Net program, VocRehabVermont, United Way, etc.)
- ✧ Client self-referrals: applicants often hear about the program's services from friends who have gotten help from ORHS
- ✧ From friends or family of re-entering offenders, often via the program's newly-launched website, <http://www.burlingtonhousing.org/article/view/21053/1/3713/>

The majority of ORHP applicants come from correctional facilities. For these clients, the facility CSS begins release planning before an inmate's projected release date. If the offender has no housing to be released to, and no friends or family with whom he/she can stay, the offender submits an application (Appendices 4-5) to the ORHP. Upon receiving an application, the ORHS will then meet with the applicant for an intake interview. Intake interviews can take place at the secured correctional facility where the applicant is being held, or if the applicant is already community-based or staying at the work release unit (the Transition Unit at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility), intake meetings can also occur at the local Probation and Parole office, the BHA, or at the offender's temporary shelter. During this meeting, the applicant is asked about his/her criminal, as well as substance abuse history, and how he/she might have changed since the time crimes were committed. The ORHS also gathers the following information about the offender for the purposes of assessing barriers to housing:

- ✧ Income
- ✧ Employment history, skills and plans for release
- ✧ Housing history and Section 8 eligibility
- ✧ Credit history
- ✧ Mental and physical health limitations
- ✧ Family status
- ✧ Strengths, treatment/programming completed, supports and plans for release

At this meeting, the ORHS has an opportunity to get to know the applicant and decide if he/she would be a good fit for the program.

The ORHS then assesses the possibility of the offender's securing a housing subsidy. If an offender has family members with whom he/she could stay, but who comprise an existing Section 8 household, it may be possible for the offender to be added to the Section 8 household and lease. This is unique with regards to public housing authority policy in the United States. For most housing authorities, applicants with a criminal record are automatically disqualified for housing subsidies. This is true for ORHP clients as well—they are usually initially denied due to criminal background. However in certain situations, the ORHS may be able to act as an agent for the Director of Rental Assistance, conducting a hearing to assess whether the denial based on criminal history could be overturned based on documentation provided by the offender of significant changes he/she has made in his/her life. If the ORHS feels that the Section 8 placement is the most appropriate housing option for the offender, he/she can make a recommendation to Section 8 staff that the offender be added to the voucher. Barring any other major problems in an individual's case, this process is generally successful.

Other aspects of an offender's situation to consider with regards to housing assistance is whether he/she has a verified disability or is the custodial parent of a child that is currently placed in out-of-home care. Assuming an offender is eligible for a subsidy and has extenuating circumstances that would warrant it, either of these circumstances could potentially yield a local preference voucher or a Family Unification Voucher—allowing for the immediate issuance of a new voucher for the offender. Statistically speaking, this generally allows for the greatest chance of success (measured by housing retention) and economic self-sufficiency, as the offender's rent is always calculated at 30% of his/her income, thus reducing the significant

pressure to maintain market rate housing (which is often too expensive to remain affordable), plus utilities, food, health care, clothing, etc. in a high cost-of-living area.

Once the ORHS has met with the applicant, he/she then has a conversation with the offender's PO. The ORHS asks whether there are any identified possible risk areas for the offender, and/or any limitations on housing placement. The ORHS is then able to more accurately represent the offender when speaking with a landlord on his/her behalf, which is the next step. Once an apartment has been secured and a landlord has agreed to rent to the applicant, the ORHS submits the apartment address to DOC personnel for review and approval. If the address is approved, funding then needs to be secured for the security deposit and first month's rent. Sometimes an applicant has money saved from the past, from working in jail, or from employment while in the work-release unit. Other applicants will need to request Transitional Housing funds (discussed earlier in the History section) or ORHP staff will make referrals on the offender's behalf to local social service agencies in an attempt to piece-meal some portion of the balance together.

On the offender's release date, the ORHS meets with both the offender and the landlord, and oftentimes the individual's PO as well, in order to get the lease addendum signed. The addendum (Appendices 8-9) stipulates that the participant understands that the major conditions of his/her lease are now conditions of his/her release into the community—this specification is the result of a detailed collaboration with the DOC, who agreed to enforce housing conditions as a tool for eviction prevention with participating landlords. Therefore substantial and/or repeated lease violations, such as non-payment of rent, noise complaints, or new criminal charges, could result in a sanction (and re-incarceration) by his/her PO. However, the DOC grant also requests that the ORHS provide housing retention and support services, giving landlords a contact person and an avenue for intervention if there are problems with a

participating tenant. The ORHS will then work directly with the tenant and/or with his/her PO to problem-solve and attempt to negotiate a continuing successful tenancy.

Landlord Outreach

To date, the ORHP has employed several landlord outreach strategies in an attempt to broaden the pool of housing resources available to offenders returning to the community. Some of the advantages that the first ORHS brought to the program included a strong connection with, and detailed contact information for, local landlords offering market rate housing—the fortuitous results of this individual’s previous employment. Using this network as an advantage, the ORHS mailed a personalized form letter (Appendix 11) to each landlord in the database to share information about the new program in an attempt to engage them and garner increased participation in the program. Unfortunately the outcome was disheartening, with positive responses from only a handful of the approximately 175 landlords listed in the database.

However, follow-up phone calls to a hand-picked group of landlords from this database proved to be more fruitful—yielding a small but potent group of

core property-owners, on whom the program still relies

several years later. A similar, more formal letter

(Appendix 12) describing the ORHP and current staff

responsibilities, is occasionally used to recruit new

landlords. The letter has not been particularly effective.

Occasional “cold-calling” or emailing of landlords listing

units in local newspapers has been somewhat more successful.



Some time later, the ORHS employed a new strategy, reaching out specifically to the President of the local Apartment Owners Association with the goal of attending an association

meeting to present about the program. Unfortunately, this appeal was never granted; it was speculated that perhaps the President of the Association did not reply for fear of appearing to endorse the program to its members by virtue of allowing the presentation to occur. However, this theory has never been proven and more recent initiatives to engage Association staff in dialogue about returning offenders has been met with some openness. ORHP staff continues to hope that programmatic changes and education about the returning offender demographic will ultimately lead to support from this agency, and thus, wider access to local property owners who may be willing to participate in the program.

Perhaps the strongest point of landlord outreach came when the first ORHP “lease addendum” was drafted (Appendix 8). The language used in the addendum was loosely based on an agreement utilized by the Drug and Mental Health Treatment Courts collaboratively offered by the District Court, the State’s Attorney’s Office, the Public Defender’s Office and HowardCenter, the local mental health/substance abuse treatment provider. The addendum stipulated that conditions of an offender’s lease with a landlord become conditions of his/her re-entry into the community per the terms of supervision by the DOC. Thus, if an offender substantially violates any part of his/her lease, the landlord can look to the DOC to put pressure on the offender, and/or re-incarcerate him/her should the situation warrant it. For landlords, this provides some peace of mind knowing that an often costly and time-consuming formal eviction process can potentially be avoided. This lease addendum was updated again in the beginning of 2007 (Appendix 9) with specific language added to clarify housing-related offenses potentially warranting a tenant’s removal. The addendum was further strengthened when housing-related conditions (Appendix 10) were added to DOC’s standard conditions for all offenders released on CR status. These conditions were the result of ORHP advocacy with the Department of Corrections, and went into effect for offenders leased up after 3/1/07.

New landlord outreach efforts within the program have become somewhat more innovative. BHA purchased a 4-6 week training course in Housing Readiness Education called “Ready to Rent” (R2R), and ORHP staff teaches these courses on an ongoing basis to DOC clients both incarcerated and in the community. The program’s intent is to recruit participating landlords by promoting R2R “graduates” as carrying a lower risk due to newly acquired or reinforced life skills, as well as by providing ongoing housing retention services. ORHP is also working to try and expand the scope of R2R in Chittenden County both by training more in-house facilitators as well as helping other community and State agencies (United Way of Chittenden County, Agency of Human Services) explore the possibility of bringing R2R to their direct partners. The ORHP has also advocated in the past for a landlord “guarantee” fund, that would provide landlords with financial reimbursement, or a “guarantee”, should a R2R graduate working with the ORHP cause damage to a unit or leave an apartment owing the landlord rent. Staff hope that these incentives could help lessen the uneasiness landlords feel about renting to individuals with significant criminal histories and other barriers to housing, as well as increase the number of landlords readily joining the ORHP network.

In addition, ORHP staff continues to brainstorm ways to create more housing opportunities and more successful landlord-tenant relationships for returning offenders.

Program Policies

- ✪ Participant must be returning to, and have DOC supervision in, Chittenden County, Vermont.
- ✪ Participant must have 60 days (documented) free of substance use.
- ✪ Participant must have at least one year left on their current sentence and will be released on Conditional Re-Entry (furlough) status.
- ✪ The program is open to applicants with major mental health problems, developmental disabilities, substance abuse issues and other physical or mental disabilities. In order for

an offender with any of the aforementioned disabilities to be accepted, there must be a treatment team in place upon release of the offender.

- ✦ Program staff will use their discretion to determine who will be accepted into the program.
- ✦ Participant must have full security deposit and first month's rent in place in order to move into an apartment through this program.
- ✦ Upon being offered housing, participant will sign a lease addendum stating that a violation of the participant's lease could be considered a violation of the participant's conditions of release via housing-related conditions (i.e., fulfilling all financial obligations, including rent and program fees; not violating any civil or criminal codes, etc.) and as such, are enforceable by DOC.
- ✦ Upon being offered housing, participant must agree to meet regularly with program staff (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly as determined by ORHP staff) for the purposes of housing retention and support.
- ✦ The security deposit will not cover the last month's rent. If the participant breaks the lease, they will automatically forfeit the security deposit. If they have not paid the current month's rent, the participant will owe that amount of rent to the landlord.
- ✦ Participation in the program may be terminated if the participant violates furlough conditions or demonstrates abusive or disrespectful behavior to program staff.

Data Tracking

When the ORHP began several years ago, data tracking was not a priority. The program had its grant numbers to fulfill by way of "housed with a subsidy" and "housed without a subsidy". However, as the program has grown and evolved, and staff have begun not only to conceptualize the program's mission differently, but also to look outside of the DOC for funding sources, tracking has become an increasingly important part of the program as a whole.

At first, the only data collection the program performed was the one required of it by the State of Vermont, via the DOC, who mandated that all transitional housing funding grantees, including the ORHP, capture their work on the officially-sanctioned data tracking system,

ServicePoint. ServicePoint is Internet-based and was conceived specifically for this task. The information requested has changed little over the past few years. Currently, the ORHP collects only an offender's name, Social Security number (if known), date of birth, last permanent zip code (if available), disability status, DOC custody status, where he/she spent last night, and whether or not an offender has a co-occurring substance abuse disorder. We also track the entrance and exit dates from both the housing search and housing retention components of the program. Entrance into housing search is generally the date of the intake interview, and exit is the date housed—which is also the entrance date for retention services. It is rare that program staff closes a retention case, but generally when it happens, it is usually due to lack of engagement, and the case can be re-opened at any time if the need arises. The program currently use ServicePoint as required by the DOC, and staff finds themselves sporadically modifying data collection methods and input processes as needed to match DOC's instructions.

About a year and a half into the program's evolution, ORHP staff recognized that as client numbers grew and staff capacity increased, some programmatic infrastructure was needed in order to stay organized. Intake paperwork (which had not been used up until this point) was developed for the program (Appendix 3), and a Microsoft Access database was created specifically to collect intake information. The key components of this file included offender name, date of birth, intake date, correctional facility, facility case worker, type of crime (vehicle, assault, drug, sex, etc.), and underlying issue (substance abuse, mental health, etc.). This database was also used to track where individuals were interested in living, his/her income (or subsidy) source, and if he/she was housed, where and when.

The Access database was ultimately abandoned, however, when the BHA discovered Tracking-at-a-Glance (TAAG). TAAG is secure web-based software designed to serve public housing authorities. In TAAG there is a needs assessment page specific to ORHP that asks

questions relevant to housing, health, education, employment, childcare, and legal history (Appendix 7). It also includes a case notes section and the ability to track information such as individuals housed by the program (and in what capacity, such as from facility or community and with subsidy or without), those who receive Transitional Housing money from DOC, those who recidivate and return to jail, those who are housed after going through programs with transitional components (access to the community for employment search, housing search, etc.), and any other piece of information program staff deems important. The program is customizable to match ORHP's evolving tracking needs, is searchable by any field in the database, updates in real time, is accessible via any secure Internet browser and easily generates clear and detailed reports. While it has its flaws (there is no way to track an individual's housing history except in case notes, for example), the program does meet ORHP's current programmatic needs, and seems to be the best vehicle thus far for honing the ORHP data tracking system.

Reflection

Strengths

Although it often feels like failure is all too common a result for ORHP clients, it is important for staff to remember that many have succeeded. For some individuals, assistance getting out of jail into stable housing is the only thing needed. For others, the addition of regular housing retention and support services to the program's repertoire has made the difference in their ability to maintain housing for the long-term.

There have been surprisingly few incidents in which landlords who work with our program have lost any large amount of money in working with our clients.

Because the program is relatively new, it has some flexibility to adapt to changes within the Department of Corrections system, the housing market, and the needs of the clientele—both returning offenders and landlords.

Areas to be Strengthened

Since the inception of this program, ORHP staff has noted the most pressing and consistent community needs are affordable housing and transitional housing programs. The units in which many of program participants are housed are of sub-standard quality and tend to not be economically sustainable for them without some sort of subsidy. In fact, the cost of rental housing and utilities is so high in the greater Burlington area that it is barely affordable for many skilled, educated, law-abiding community members. There must be more options for affordable and/or supportive housing, as this is what has been shown to help people the most.

Additionally, another obvious gap in services in the Burlington community is case management for individuals under supervision. It is generally thought, particularly by other housing agencies in the community, that an individual's PO is, in essence, their case manager. From this program's vantage point, while PO's often offer equal parts support and accountability, they cannot, and do not, function in this role. Nor can the ORHP serve in this capacity as BHA is not a social service agency. However, having a PO precludes our clients from accessing case management services (which includes community provider referrals, advocacy, housing placement assistance, financial assistance, etc.) where they might otherwise be available. Both case management and transitional housing, especially in conjunction with one another, have been proven to reduce homelessness, and with our population, recidivism rates.

Finally, what ORHP staff have heard consistently from landlords (both those with whom the program already works, and those who it would like to bring on board) is that in

order to take on the greater level of risk that comes with housing our clients (who have criminal records on top of existing housing barriers such as poor credit, poor landlord history, lack of financial viability, etc.), it would be helpful to have some type of financial guarantee should things go awry.

Programmatically, this would work well with graduates of our housing readiness course, R2R, but finding initial funding and maintaining the program are both challenging elements to creating even a pilot program.

Appendices

1. Old Consent Form
2. New Consent Form
3. Intake Form
4. Original Application
5. Updated Application
6. Participant Policies
7. Needs Assessment
8. Old Lease Addendum
9. New Lease Addendum
10. Conditions for Parole Officers
11. Original Landlord Outreach Letter
12. Formal Landlord Outreach Letter

Appendix 1—Old Consent Form

CONSENT FOR RELEASE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION FOR COORDINATION
OF REENTRY SERVICES

I, _____ consent to the release of confidential information held by the Offender Re-entry Housing Specialist at Burlington Housing Authority,

To anyone involved in my treatment, housing, furlough or parole conditions which could include:

- Department of Corrections,
- Howard Center for Human Services,
- Vocational Rehabilitation,
- Burlington Housing Authority,
- The staff and panel members of the Burlington Offender Reentry Program
- A landlord who is considering renting to me

I understand that the purpose for the communication and disclosure of my alcohol and drug information, or other information relevant to my furlough or probation conditions among the staff of the programs identified above is to allow those staff members to facilitate my health services, my housing and employment needs, other referral and assessment needs, and, as necessary, develop a coordinated plan to maintain my successful transition from incarceration to living in the community.

Name of Program Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Date

Witness

Date

**BURLINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY
OFFENDER RE-ENTRY HOUSING PROGRAM
AUTHORIZATION TO USE AND DISCLOSE HEALTH, HOUSING
AND OTHER INFORMATION FOR HOUSING AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

I, _____, born on _____, authorize the use and disclosure of my personal and confidential information described below, including my personal health information, by and among each of the Cooperating Agencies of the Burlington Housing Authority’s (“BHA”) Offender Re-Entry Housing Program (“Re-Entry Program”), including the staff of each of the Cooperating Agencies (the “Cooperating Agencies”). The Cooperating Agencies consist of:

- Burlington Community Justice Center
- Winooski Community Justice Center
- Howard Center for Human Services
- Burlington Housing Authority
- Vermont Agency of Human Services including, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living, Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Health
- State’s Attorney
- Public Defender
- VT Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation(VABIR)
- Other (identify)_____

THE MEANS OF THIS USE OR DISCLOSURE MAY BE WRITTEN, VERBAL OR ELECTRONIC.

I understand that the purpose for the sharing and disclosure of my health, housing, alcohol and drug information or other information relevant to my furlough or probation conditions among the staff of the Cooperating Agencies identified above is to allow those staff members to help with my health services, my housing and employment needs, other referral and assessment needs, and, as necessary, develop and implement a coordinated plan to assist with my transition from incarceration to living in the community, consistent with my conditions of furlough or probation.

The information which will be shared among the staff of the Cooperating Agencies is information concerning my:

- Conditions of furlough or probation, including any violations of those conditions;
- Criminal history;
- Mental health history, including treatment;
- Current social networks (for example, family and friends);
- Employment history and income status;
- Drug and alcohol history, including treatment;

- Current suitability for particular housing;
- Current suitability for particular employment possibilities;
- Other: (identify)_____

ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS CONCERNING YOUR AUTHORIZATION:

My signature indicates that I understand the important information provided in this Authorization.

I understand that I have the right to revoke this Authorization at any time, but revoking this Authorization will not affect any actions which were taken by the Cooperating Agencies in reliance on this Authorization before I revoked it. In addition, I understand that if I revoke this Authorization, it may affect my conditions of release and/or BHA’s willingness to permit my continued participation in the Re-Entry Program. Unless previously revoked by me, this Authorization will remain in effect until one month after the end of my participation in the Re-Entry Program.

I understand that if I want one of more of the Cooperating Agencies to disclose information about me to someone other than one of the Cooperating Agencies or for a purpose other than the purposes described in this Authorization, I will need to sign a separate Authorization to release information.

I understand that I am not required to sign this Authorization, but that the BHA will not be able to provide services to me under the Re-Entry Program without this signed Authorization. I understand that even if I decline to sign this Authorization, I may apply for BHA services other than participation in the Re-Entry Program.

I also understand that I may request restrictions on use or disclosure of medical treatment records and information for the purposes described in this Authorization and that the Cooperating Agency in the Re-Entry Program to whom that request is made may or may not agree to the requested restrictions.

I have read all of the above information and I understand its contents. I have been provided with a copy of this signed Authorization.

I understand that information released may include medical, mental health and/or drug and alcohol issues. I understand that if I am in a federally assisted drug or alcohol program, federal regulations (42 CFR Part 2) prohibit the re-disclosure of this information without my written Authorization and as otherwise allowed by the regulations.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature and Job Title of Person

Date

Appendix 3—Intake Form

Intake Form

Date _____

Name _____ DOB _____ Sex _____

Correctional Facility _____ Case Manager _____

P.O. _____ Min _____ Max _____

Current Offense + Location of Offense _____

Past Offenses and Locations _____

Any High Profile Crimes _____

Victim(s) name and location _____

Notified? _____

Underlying Causes of Offense(s) (substance abuse, violence etc) _____

Substance Abuse? _____

Programming Inside _____

Possible Outside Programming _____

Last Residence (type, location and with whom) _____

Past Residences (type, location and with whom) _____

Possible People to Live With Now _____

Conditions of Reentry (including limitations on housing placement) _____

Relationship with Family _____

Reentry Needs (treatment, mentor etc) _____

Education History and Needs _____

Employment History and Skills _____

Ideas for Future Employment _____

Children, Spouse, Significant Other _____

Desired Location and Housing Type _____

Drivers License? Plans for Transportation _____

Housing Assistance Needed (received support in past? Applied for section8?) _____

Financial Situation _____

Disabilities (physical and mental) _____

Past Treatment _____

Notes

Appendix 4—Original Application

Date _____

Offender Re-entry Housing Application

Please fill out to the best of your ability

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Correctional Facility _____ Caseworker _____

Who will your parole officer be? (if known) _____

Current Sentence _____ Min Date _____ Max Date _____

Most Recent Charges _____

Past Charges _____

Do you or have you ever struggled with substance abuse? _____

If yes, what is your substance of choice? _____

Your Employment history and skills _____

Your ideas for future employment _____

Where do you want to live when you get out? _____

Do you want to live with someone else? Who? _____

What is your relationship to him/her? _____

Will you be taking the bus?

Walking?

Are you allowed to drive? _____

Do you have any money saved up now? _____

How do you plan to pay rent? _____

Do you owe any money to landlords, section 8, or utility companies? _____

Have you ever had section 8 in the past? _____

Do you have any mental or physical disability? _____

Do you have any children, a spouse or significant other? If so, how will they be a part of your life when you get out? _____

What programming/treatment have you done while in prison? _____

Will there be required programming or treatment upon release? _____

Are there restrictions on where you can live, or who you can live around? _____

What is your plan for when you get out? (i.e. how will you stay out of trouble, how will you pay your rent, what will you do to occupy yourself, how will things be different from before, etc.)

Please return to:
Offender Re-Entry Housing Program
Burlington Housing Authority
65 Main St.
Burlington, VT 05401
Fax: (802) 658-1286

Appendix 5—Updated Application

Date _____

Offender Re-entry Housing Program (ORHP) Application

Attention: You must be returning to Chittenden County to apply for this program. Please fill out completely and truthfully to the best of your ability, as this application is a screening tool for this program. Anything incomplete or inaccurate could affect our ability to assist you. Please ask a caseworker, parole officer or support person for help if you need it. Also, this program does not have any financial assistance available, so you must have the ability to pay for security deposit and first month’s rent, as well as stable employment or other means of paying rent in order for us to be able to assist you.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name _____ Sex _____ Date of Birth _____

Current phone number and/or email address _____

If you are incarcerated, which correctional facility _____

How long have you been incarcerated? _____

Date of minimum _____ Date of maximum _____

Who is your case worker? _____

Who is/will be your parole officer? _____

Do you have any type of physical or mental disability? _____

If so, do you receive any type of benefits (SSI, SSDI, GA, etc)? _____

If yes, what and how much/month? _____

CRIMINAL HISTORY

Most Recent Charges (w/ date) _____

Past Charges (complete list w/ dates) _____

What are risk areas for you or things/people/areas you need to stay away from? _____

Do you or have you ever struggled with substance abuse? _____



If yes, what is your substance of choice? _____

If yes, have you received treatment? _____

If yes, where and when? _____

How much clean time do you have? _____

Will there be required programming or treatment upon release? _____

If so, which program and how often? _____

EMPLOYMENT

Please list your employment history and skills: _____

Do you currently have a job or have a job lined up for when you get out? _____

If yes, where, or with whom? _____

How many hours do you/will you work? _____

How much do you make per hour? _____

If not, what is your plan for obtaining employment? _____

HOUSING

Where do you want to live when you get out? _____

Do you want to live with someone else? Who? _____

What is your relationship to him/her? _____

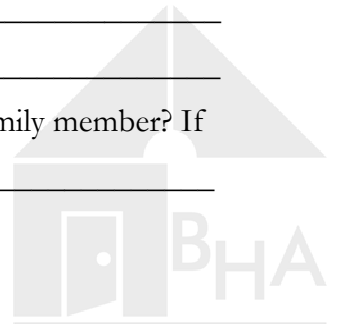
Do you have any money saved up now? If yes, how much? _____

How will you afford security deposit and first month's rent? (The ORHP has no financial assistance available and can only assist those with means to pay for an apartment or that can participate in the Section 8 program) _____

How will you pay your monthly rent (i.e. employment wages, SSI, family help, etc.)? _____

Have you ever had a lease in your name? _____

Have you ever paid rent regularly to anyone even if it was a friend or family member? If yes, to whom? _____



Do you owe any money to old landlords? If yes, who? How much? From when?

Has a landlord ever terminated your tenancy (formally asked you to leave)? _____

Were you evicted through the court system? _____

Have you ever had Section 8, and/or have lived in any public/subsidized housing? If yes, where/when? _____

If yes, do you owe any money to Section 8? _____

Do you owe any money to utility companies for old bills? If yes, to whom? How much? From when? _____

Do you have children, a spouse or significant other? _____

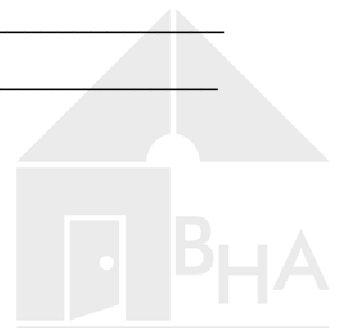
If so, how will they be a part of your life when you get out/get housing? _____

Do you have any friends or family you can live with temporarily or permanently (even if they are on the Section 8 Program)? If yes, who, and where do they live? _____

Are there restrictions on where you can live, or who you can live near? _____

Have you applied to (circle if yes): Dismas House, Northern Lights (women only), Good Neighbor Program, Oxford House or Bravo Unit (Transition-Unit)? If not, why not? If so, what was the response? _____

Do you have credit? If so, it is good or bad? _____



What is your plan for when you get out (i.e., how will you stay out of trouble, what will you do to occupy yourself, how will things be different from before, etc.)? _____

Is there anything else you would like to tell us? _____

**Please return to:
Offender Re-Entry Housing Program
Burlington Housing Authority
65 Main Street, Burlington, VT 05401
Phone: (802) 864-0538/Fax: (802) 658-1286**



Appendix 6—Participant Policies

Offender Re-Entry Housing Program (ORHP) Policies

1. Participant must be returning to, and have DOC supervision in, Chittenden County.
2. Participant must have 60 days (documented) free of substance use.
3. Participant must have at least one year left on their current sentence, and will be released on CR (furlough) status.
4. The program is open to applicants with major mental health problems, developmental disabilities, substance abuse issues and/or other physical or mental disabilities. In order for an offender with any of the aforementioned disabilities to be accepted, there must be a treatment team in place upon release of the offender.
5. Program staff will use their discretion to determine who will be accepted into the program.
6. Participant must have full security deposit and first month's rent in place in order to move into an apartment through this program.
7. Upon being offered housing, participant will sign a lease addendum stating that a violation of the participant's lease could be considered a violation of the participant's conditions of release via housing-related conditions (i.e., fulfilling all financial obligations, including rent and program fees; not violating any civil or criminal codes, etc.) and as such, are enforceable by DOC.
8. Upon being offered housing, participant must agree to meet regularly with program staff (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly as determined by ORHP staff) for the purposes of housing retention and support.
9. The security deposit will not cover last month's rent. If the participant breaks the lease, they automatically forfeit the security deposit. If they have not paid the current month's rent, the participant will owe that amount of rent to the landlord.
10. Participation in the program may be terminated if the participant violates furlough conditions or demonstrates abusive or disrespectful behavior to program staff.

I have read, understand and agree to the above.

Participant Signature

Date

Offender Re-Entry Needs Assessment
Burlington Housing Authority

Employment Assessment:

1. Are you currently employed? yes no n/a
2. Do you want help finding a job? yes no n/a
3. Are you able to work? yes no n/a
4. Are you currently seeking employment? yes no n/a
5. Do you have employment lined up? yes no n/a

Education Assessment:

1. Do you have a High School diploma or GED? yes no n/a
2. Are you currently enrolled in any adult education classes? yes no n/a
3. Are you hoping/planning to go back to school? yes no n/a

Childcare Assessment:

1. Do you have kids living with you for whom you are responsible? yes no n/a
2. Do you need childcare in order to work or attend school? yes no n/a
3. Do you have a friend who can watch your children? yes no n/a
4. Do you have a relative who can watch your children? yes no n/a
5. Do you have children outside of your care or custody with whom you are hoping to reunify?
 yes no n/a

Health Assessment:

1. Do you have health insurance? yes no n/a
2. Do you have a primary care physician? yes no n/a
3. Would you be interested in mental health counseling? yes no n/a
4. Would you be interested in substance abuse counseling? yes no n/a

5. Do you have a physical disability? yes no n/a
6. Do you have a mental disability? yes no n/a
7. Do you now or have you ever struggled with substance abuse? yes no n/a
8. If yes, have you received treatment? yes no n/a
9. If yes, do you currently need substance abuse treatment or services? yes no n/a

Housing Assessment:

1. Do you have a Housing Choice Section 8 Voucher? yes no n/a
2. Are you currently on a waiting list for Section 8? yes no n/a
3. Would you like a Housing Choice Voucher? yes no n/a
4. Are you currently seeking housing? yes no n/a
5. Do you have the means to pay for security deposit? yes no n/a
6. Do you have the means to pay for first month's rent? yes no n/a
7. Have you ever had a section 8 voucher or lived in subsidized housing?
 yes no n/a
8. If yes, do you owe any money to section 8? yes no n/a
9. Do you owe any money to old landlords? yes no n/a
10. Do you owe money on any old utility bills? yes no n/a
11. Have you ever been evicted? yes no n/a
12. Are you interested in participating in a good tenant workshop called Ready To Rent?
 yes no n/a

Financial Assessment:

1. Would you be interested in credit repair and/or counseling? yes no n/a
2. Would you be interested in financial management counseling? yes no n/a
3. Do you have credit? yes no n/a
4. Do you have good credit? yes no n/a
5. Do you have bad credit? yes no n/a
6. Do you currently have any money saved? yes no n/a

Legal Assessment:

1. Are you on parole? yes no n/a

2. Are you currently incarcerated? yes no n/a

3. Do you have a Probation Officer? yes no n/a

If yes, please provide name: _____

4. Are you on Conditional Re-Entry (CR) or Reintegrated Furlough (RF) status? yes no n/a

5. Have you ever been convicted of a sex offense? yes no n/a

6. Have you ever been convicted of drug charges? yes no n/a

7. Have you ever been convicted of arson? yes no n/a

8. Do you have any restrictions on where you can live? yes no n/a

Other Assessment:

1. Are you a veteran? yes no n/a

2. Do you have any other needs or interests not covered in this questionnaire? yes no n/a

Client's first and last name: _____

BHA Staff Member filling out form: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 8—Old Lease Addendum

ADDENDUM to lease
thru Offender Re-Entry Program

_____ has been seeking housing thru the Offender Re-entry Housing Program at the Burlington Housing Authority.

Housing can be maintained if the following terms are met:

1. _____ strictly follows the terms of his Conditional Re-entry as set up by the Department of Corrections. A breach of conditions could be considered a violation of the lease agreement
2. _____ does not “abandon” apartment (as outlined in Renting In Vermont handbook).
3. _____ maintains the terms of his lease. A violation of his lease will be considered a violation of his Conditional Re-entry. This includes paying full rent amount on or around the first of the month. (within 5 days)
4. _____ maintains contact with Miriam Popper, Offender Re-Entry Housing Specialist on as needed basis regarding housing issues
5. _____ maintains steady employment at all times

Miriam Popper,
Offender Re-entry Housing Specialist

Date

I understand and accept these terms

Date

Appendix 9—New Lease Addendum

LEASE ADDENDUM
BURLINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY'S
OFFENDER RE-ENTRY PROGRAM

THIS AGREEMENT is made this ____ day of _____, 200_, between _____, Owner and _____, Tenant of Owner at _____, _____, Vermont (the "unit"). The parties hereby agree to enter into and be bound by this Addendum under the following terms and conditions:

WHEREAS, the Burlington Housing Authority has implemented the Offender Re-entry Program in cooperation with the Vermont Department of Corrections pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding; AND

WHEREAS, the Tenant must obtain housing in order to be released into the community; AND

WHEREAS, the Owner is willing to participate in this Program and accept a participant/tenant who will be put into the community on conditional release/furlough under the supervision of the Vermont Department of Corrections or Parole Board to live in the above-referenced unit under the following conditions;

NOW THEREFORE, the parties do hereby agree to the following:

1. Tenant agrees to comply with all the terms of the Lease signed between Owner and Tenant, including but not limited to paying rent in a timely manner no later than the 5th day of each month, not causing damage to Owner's property and not engaging in criminal activities on or off Owner's property.

2. Tenant understands that if s/he is released into the community under the conditional release program/furlough, s/he can be returned to incarceration/jail in the event s/he violates his/her conditions of release.

3. Tenant agrees that in the event s/he substantially violates the terms of the lease, Owner shall have the right to contact Tenant's Corrections' Officer and request that the Department of Corrections review the behavior to determine if Tenant has violated the terms of his/her conditional re-entry agreement. Owner must have sufficient grounds to bring Tenant's behavior to the attention of the Department. Examples of serious and/or repeated Tenant conduct supporting immediate removal from the unit are:

- A. Repeated late and nonpayment of rent.
- B. Tenant has a party at the unit, the police are called and a noise citation issued.
- C. Tenant/Tenant's guests cause extensive damage beyond normal wear and tear to

Owner's property.

Initial Here

- D. Tenant engages in any type of criminal activity on or off the Owner's property whether or not criminal charges are brought.
- E. The neighbors repeatedly complain of noise coming from Tenant's unit.
- F. Tenant assaults another resident.
- G. Tenant allows person not named on the lease to move into the unit without Owner's prior written consent.
- H. Tenant fails to keep the unit in clean and sanitary condition that either causes damage or presents serious safety concerns to the Tenant or to other residents in violation of minimum housing housekeeping standards.

4. This Lease Addendum shall be incorporated into the lease and shall be in full force and effect for a period of one (1) year from the effective date of the lease.

I have read the foregoing Addendum and understand and accept its terms and conditions.

DATE	TENANT

DATE	OWNER

DATE	BHA Offender Re-Entry Program Duly Authorized Agent

TENANT EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION:

Name of Contact Person: _____
 Address: _____
 Phone Number: _____
 Relationship to Tenant: _____

Appendix 10—Conditions for Parole Officers

I will fulfill all financial obligations required of me including, but not limited to: rent and program fees as required.

I will reside as directed by the Department of Corrections. For purposes of this condition “reside as directed” shall include, but is not limited to: where I reside; with whom; residing in accordance with all applicable municipal/city ordinances and codes.

Appendix II—Original Landlord Outreach Letter

[Date]

Dear Landlord,

My name is [name]. I work for the Burlington Housing Authority in the position of Offender Re-Entry Housing Specialist. It's a newly created position jointly funded by the Burlington Housing Authority, the Department of Corrections and the Community Justice Centers of Burlington and Winooski. Our goal is to provide support and supervision to enable offenders to make a successful return to the community after incarceration.

The main goal of my position is to find suitable housing for offenders that are re-entering the community. Some will have a Section 8 voucher for themselves or for their family; some will be paying completely out of pocket. The majority of the people I will be working with will be out on what's called "Conditional Re-entry." This means that strict conditions are imposed, closely monitored and enforced by the Department of Corrections. I am available to be in close communication with landlords, offenders and the Department of Corrections. If an offender does violate the conditions of re-entry or re-offend while out in the community sanctions will be applied, including the possibility of return to prison. The hope is this supervision would minimize the risk to a potential landlord.

I write to you now because the housing market is tough and quite honestly I need new resources. If you have places that you think are suitable for this population, or if you'd just like to hear more details please give me a call. I may also be checking in with you with some of my specific needs. If you are uncomfortable working with the offender population I'd understand and wouldn't bother you more than once.

Thanks for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

[Name]

Offender Re-entry Housing Specialist

Appendix 12—Formal Landlord Outreach Letter

[Date]

[Salutation],

In the past, representatives from Burlington Housing Authority’s Offender Re-Entry Housing Program have contacted you requesting an opportunity to share information about our program with your organization’s staff and member landlords. We’ve been fortunate enough to meet with you personally and to speak with you by phone on multiple occasions. As a result of these meetings, as well as of independent outreach to local landlords, we’ve been able to gather feedback about our program and use this it to strengthen the core elements of the program.

What you already know: the Offender Re-Entry Housing Program, a collaboration of the Burlington Housing Authority (BHA) and the Department of Corrections (DOC), is intended to facilitate the successful return of incarcerated offenders back to their communities of origin. For all returning offenders, housing is a critical element of this process. BHA employs two Offender Re-Entry Housing Specialists to help returning offenders find permanent housing; they work closely with landlords, DOC staff, and the offenders to help create successful tenancies. Because returning offenders are on “Conditional Re-entry” status with DOC, they have a strict set of conditions imposed upon them and are closely supervised by DOC staff to make sure they are following through. If the offender violates any of the conditions, or commits a new offense while in the community, DOC can immediately impose sanctions—if the violation is substantial enough, an offender might even return to incarceration. An integral part of our program is the Lease Addendum, which makes clear that the offender involved in the Offender Re-Entry Program understands that a substantial violation of the Lease Agreement, including timely payment of rent, could be considered a violation of his/her re-entry conditions, possibly eliminating the need for eviction. DOC is willing and able to enforce these provisions. In addition, the Offender Re-Entry Housing Program staff believes housing retention and support for returning offenders is key. This requires close communication with landlords, offenders, and the DOC in an effort to address and resolve any issues that might hinder a tenant’s ability to maintain a successful tenancy as early as possible.

What you may not know: We’ve made some changes to the program. We emphasize the housing retention process versus simple housing placement. We respect the fact that this program cannot exist without landlords who are willing to work with us, and so therefore we make responding to landlords’ concerns a priority, to the best of our ability. Based on feedback that it wasn’t strong enough, with the help of BHA and DOC’s lawyers, we recently revamped our lease addendum. The new document is attached. DOC staff now also includes specific language in an offender’s conditions of release that supports the enforcement of the lease addendum by recognizing non-payment of rent as a violation of condition. And finally, the Offender Re-Entry Housing Specialists are now teaching a 12-hour course called “Ready to Rent” to incarcerated offenders. To earn a Ready to Rent Diploma, participants attend a 4-6 week housing readiness education class, where they work

closely with the housing specialists and peers to accept responsibility for past rental issues, repair their credit, create a workable budget, prioritize housing needs, develop a housing search plan, understand the application and rental process, learn how to maintain appropriate housekeeping, communicate effectively with their landlord, and fulfill their goal to become a successful renter. The goal is to assist individuals with housing barriers who are both willing and able to “work” to prove that they will be good renters; our Offender Re-Entry Housing Specialists will be working to help these Ready to Rent graduates then find housing in Chittenden County. I’ve included some Ready to Rent information for you to peruse.

We absolutely understand that there are some calculated risks involved in renting to individuals who have criminal backgrounds. But we hope that the recent additions and improvements to our program will alleviate your greatest concerns about working with our clients and allow you to feel confident enough to give our program a chance. If you are interested in working with us or would like to hear more about the program, please call me, or my colleague Miriam Popper. Also, we would appreciate an opportunity to speak with you in person, present to members of your association, or write up a blurb to be included in your next newsletter.

Many thanks in advance for your time and consideration.

[Name]
Offender Re-Entry Housing Specialists
Burlington Housing Authority
65 Main Street
Burlington, VT 05401