

## Housing Vouchers Upon Release from DOC Custody: Relationship to Recidivism, Homelessness, Public Benefits, and Employment

People returning to the community after a period of prison confinement may be eligible for rental housing vouchers, which are intended to increase post-incarceration housing stability and reduce recidivism. In 2023, the Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to conduct a study of this voucher program after changes were made to expand eligibility and increase the duration of voucher payments.

### Background

The period immediately following release from prison has been found to be critical to long-term desistance from crime. To support people during this time, state law provides transitional housing support that can be used at approved housing providers for up to six months. Using data on people released from the Department of Corrections (DOC) between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2024, we explored the relationship between housing vouchers and recidivism and other measures of successful reentry.

### Findings

- People who were vouchered were less likely to experience homelessness, more likely to find employment and earn more money from that employment, and less likely to be rearrested.
- Longer periods of vouchered housing were associated with larger benefits, and benefits were strongest while someone was actively receiving vouchers.
- People who received housing vouchers were more likely to receive other public benefits.
- Benefit-cost analysis indicated that the benefits of voucher programs outweighed the costs. Each dollar spent on vouchers returned about \$1.12 in benefits.

### Limitations

These findings should be understood as descriptive and not interpreted as causal. Other factors may influence the desire to seek housing vouchers upon release from DOC custody, which may have influenced findings.

**Predicted Number of Arrests, by Vouchered Status**



### Assignment Details

Assigned in the 2022 Legislative Session  
2SHB 1818, Sponsor: Rep Simmons

[Full report available on WSIPP's website](#)

Project lead: Travis A. Taniguchi, PhD  
[travis.taniguchi@wsipp.wa.gov](mailto:travis.taniguchi@wsipp.wa.gov)  
360.664.9805