

Just Home Project: Charleston County Messaging Guide

On May 18, Charleston County announced its selection to participate in the Just Home Project, a national program led by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Urban Institute designed to advance community-driven efforts to break the link between housing instability and jail incarceration. Key information on this program and Charleston County's participation is outlined in the resource below.

For information on this program, please contact Chelsea Diedrich, cdiedrich@charlestoncounty.org.

What is the relationship between housing instability and incarceration?

- One in four people had periods of homelessness in the year before their incarceration, and the problem has worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic.ⁱ
- Even before the COVID-19 crisis, Black and Latinx communities were disproportionately impacted by both the criminal justice system and housing instability.^{ii iii}
- People who have been incarcerated face significant barriers to finding and maintaining stable housing, and incarceration can lead to job loss or other financial problems that threaten their ability to pay for housing.^{iv}
- People with a history of justice involvement have limited access to housing assistance through government programs and often face discriminatory screening practices when applying for housing. And experiencing chronic homelessness can increase the chances that a person becomes involved with the justice system due to the criminalization of sleeping, sitting, and asking for money or resources in public spaces.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Local data framing the issue^v:
 - In 2021, there were 1,048 familiar faces who cycled through the jail three or more times in a two-year period (decreased 71% from 2014).
 - In 2021, there were 6.5 black adults incarcerated for every 1 white adults.
 - The most frequently occurring charge for familiar faces 2019, 2021, and 2021 was trespassing, which is regularly accompanied by shoplifting, disorderly conduct, and public intoxication charges. These types of charges are often symptomatic of underlying issues such as homelessness, mental health, and/or substance abuse.

What is the Just Home Project?

- The Just Home Project, a national program led by the MacArthur Foundation and Urban Institute, is designed to advance community-driven efforts to break the link between housing instability and jail incarceration. Charleston County, SC, along with Minnehaha County, SD, City and County of San Francisco, CA, and Tulsa County, OK, was selected to receive a planning grant from MacArthur to address this crisis in their community. At the completion of the planning process, each community is eligible to receive additional grant funds and program-related investments

from MacArthur to implement their plan and establish housing for populations that are not being served by existing resources.

- With technical assistance and coordination from Urban, the Just Home Project encourages sites to design innovative programs that develop new models for addressing this serious and persistent problem. Resources provided through this grant and the subsequent opportunity to receive investment financing from the MacArthur Foundation, will allow the communities to tackle this problem collaboratively by bringing together government officials involved with criminal justice and housing, non-profit partners, and impacted community members to create effective approaches to combat this issue.

How will Charleston County use the funding and assistance provided through the Just Home Project?

- Charleston County's selection to the Just Home Project includes a planning grant from the MacArthur Foundation to create an individualized program that addresses this crisis within its own community, along with technical assistance and coordination provided by the Urban Institute. During the second phase of the Just Home Project, Charleston County will be eligible to receive program-related investment funds from the MacArthur Foundation to establish necessary services and housing for populations that are not being served by resources currently available in the region.
- Charleston County intends to use planning funds to engage with local partners, individuals with lived experience, civic leaders, and residents to identify the best possible strategies for combatting the cycle of homelessness and incarceration, with special emphasis placed on tackling racial disparities existing within our criminal justice system. The planning period will focus on creating a comprehensive program that pairs rapid-rehousing with targeted supportive services.

What criteria did Charleston County need to meet for selection to this project?

- Charleston County was selected to participate in the Just Home Project for demonstrating a strong commitment to the core mission and values of this project, including:
 - Meaningful cross-sector collaboration;
 - Centering the experiences of community members with lived experiences of justice involvement and homelessness in decision making; and
 - Targeting housing investments to create needed solutions to house and stabilize justice-involved populations as they re-enter communities with a goal of breaking cycles of incarceration.
- Charleston County looks forward to building upon the progress already established by its CJCC.
 - Since 2014, CJCC initiatives has led to a 71% reduction in the number of individuals repeatedly cycling through jail three or more times per year.
 - In 2021, the CJCC implemented the Most Visible Persons (MVP) pilot project to work towards breaking the cycle of book, release, repeat among the most familiar faces in the

local criminal justice system. The MVP initiative involves inter-agency case conferencing with service providers, law enforcement and judicial stakeholders, infrastructure development, and wraparound services. The Just Home Project will allow Charleston County to build upon data collected and connection established through the MVP program.

What other communities were selected to participate in the Just Home Project aside from Charleston County?

- In addition to Charleston County, other communities selected for the Just Home Project include: Minnehaha County, South Dakota; the City and County of San Francisco, California; and Tulsa County, Oklahoma.

What is impact investing and how is it being used here?

- Impact investments are investments that are more patient, risk-tolerant, concessionary, and flexible than typical investments and fill gaps left by the conventional marketplace.
- By blending grant funding with impact investments, this demonstration project seeks to unlock local government innovation, absorb risk that housing providers are hesitant to take, and provide much-needed support for people at risk of remaining trapped in a cycle of housing instability and jail.
- The MacArthur Foundation and the Urban Institute hope to foster innovation that will develop new models for addressing this serious and persistent problem. With the awards along with technical assistance and coordination from Urban, each community will develop their own unique plan for addressing the link between incarceration and housing instability. These resources, and the subsequent opportunity to receive investment financing from the MacArthur Foundation in the form of a program-related investment (PRI), will allow the communities to tackle this problem collaboratively by bringing together government officials involved with criminal justice and housing, non-profit partners, and impacted community members to develop innovative approaches to this issue.

What is the Safety and Justice Challenge?

- The MacArthur Foundation's [Safety and Justice Challenge](https://safetyandjusticechallenge.org/our-network/charleston-county-sc/) is an initiative that began in 2015 to reduce jail population as well as racial and ethnic disparities in jails. You can find more information on Charleston County's work with the SJC here: <https://safetyandjusticechallenge.org/our-network/charleston-county-sc/>

Resources:

ⁱ “Advancing Vulnerable Populations,” Corporation for Supportive Housing, <http://www.csh.org/csh-solutions/serving-vulnerable-populations/re-entry-populations>.

ⁱⁱ Zeng, Zhen, and Todd D. Minton. 2021. “Jail Inmates in 2019.” Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

ⁱⁱⁱ Batko, Samantha, Sarah Gillespie, Katrina Ballard, Mary K. Cunningham, Barbara Poppe, and Stephen Metraux. 2020. Alternatives to Arrests and Police Responses to Homelessness: Evidence-Based Models and Promising Practices. Washington, DC. Urban Institute.

^{iv} Metraux, Stephen, Caterina Roman, and Richard Cho. 2007. “Incarceration and Homelessness.” Paper presented at the National Symposium on Homelessness Research, Washington, DC, March 1–2

^v “Annual Report 2021”, Charleston County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, <https://cjcc.charlestoncounty.org/files/CJCC-2021-ANNUAL-REPORT.pdf>