

HOUSING

Video

State Senator Liane M. Sorenson
Minority Whip (R,DE)

Audio

“It’s very difficult for folks that have been in prison, particularly those who have been in for a long time, to come out and get their lives back together. I used to be a counselor at the battered women’s shelter. If you’re homeless and you don’t have a job, and you don’t have a car, and you don’t have childcare, it’s a spiral. You don’t know where...you can’t get a job without transportation and childcare and you can’t get transportation and childcare without a job, and you can’t get a job unless you have an address. It’s very difficult. So we need people that can help with all those services. Some people do come out of prison and go back into their homes and go back and are in good shape. But many people don’t. They’ve got to start all over again. And so, we need programs to do this.”

THE FORTUNE SOCIETY, THE FORTUNE ACADEMY **New York, NY**

Deborah Burton, The Fortune Academy
Resident

“I want you all to know, today is the greatest day in the world for me. I get my first paycheck.”

B-roll of group meeting

V.O.#1

These men and women are participating in a focus meeting, something that residents of The Fortune Academy do every morning. The Academy is transitional supportive housing, built by The Fortune Society, which has been in the business for more than 30 years of assisting prisoners and men and women who were formerly incarcerated. In addition to providing 50 emergency and long-term beds, they provide numerous services, including drug treatment, HIV and mental health services, alternatives to incarceration, and housing.

JoAnne Page, Executive Director
The Fortune Society

“What we decided to do, because we couldn’t find it anywhere, was create housing that was low threshold that basically screened on motivation and pretty much nothing else. That would give people a starting place so that they could build their lives in a safe and supportive community instead of the horrible situations that we saw people going to.”

B-roll

V.O.#2

When Deborah was released from prison after doing eight years, she had no place to go. Like many people released from prison, she went to a shelter.

Deborah Burton, The Fortune Academy
Resident

“I’d never been in a shelter in my life and that was like...people walking all around; there were people vomiting. It was just nasty. It was nasty, right? I spent the night there sleeping on my bag with my head doing one of these numbers [looks side to side]. Scared to death -- scared to death, right? And you would think, after being in jail, you wouldn’t be afraid, but no. These women, the whole setting, the way the beds were set, was strange to me. Okay? And then I didn’t want to have to go into any problems and have any physical altercations. So the next morning, as soon as I got up, I ran to my PO first. I told my PO to please let me go. You can’t get housing ...when the parole sends you one place, you have to have permission to leave to move into another place.”

JoAnne Page

“It’s already so hard for somebody to make the transition from prison to being a member of the community. When you throw homelessness in the mix, the odds just tilt overwhelmingly against the person.”

B-roll

V.O.#3

Fortunately for Deborah, who also works at the Academy, the doors of the Academy opened in April of 2002.

JoAnne Page

“A large part of what we provide, I think, is the missing ingredient that either makes or breaks somebody’s reentry – and that’s hope. Because most of our staff are ex-offenders in recovery, we offer some really powerful role modeling. People can walk in our doors, see somebody they drugged with, see somebody they did time next to, and that person is working for us, sometimes in a line staff position, sometimes management, sometimes upper management.”

Diana Davila-Ross
Deputy Executive Director of Programming
The Fortune Society

“We provide breakfast and lunch for people in emergency housing and dinner for everybody.”

B-roll

V.O.#4

Diana Davila Ross has been working at The Fortune Society for 14 years. She came as a counselor after serving a four-year prison sentence. Now she is Deputy Executive Director of Programs.

Diana Davila-Ross

“A lot of times, people would put a family member’s name or a friend’s name that they knew they clearly could not stay with.

There was drug activity still going on. It just wasn't a good place for people to go back. It was the old neighborhood, you know. We knew that housing was a real problem for people getting out of prison."

Vernon Harris, The Fortune Academy
Resident

"Some of you may know, I'm moving out. That's a big step for me. I've never really had a place of my own. I've always lived with someone, either a family member or significant other. This is the first time that I'm going to have an apartment where my name is on the lease and it's all mine. There is a lot of anxiety because I've never had that sole responsibility for everything: rent, food, clothing, entertainment, things of that nature. This is something I have to do on my own now. When it comes to prison, this is the longest time that I've been out in the free world without returning back to prison. I'm out now 16 months and a lot of things are new to me, even though I'm 44 years old."

JoAnne Page

"Our basic attitude is that when you walk in our door, you're part of our community. We'll work with you, with whatever it takes, to help you take the next steps and help you stabilize your life. We also have ongoing aftercare. So people can come back any time. What you see with housing is that people can really blossom. It's like a greenhouse for growth, because if people feel safe where they're living, they can take the risks and do the hard things that it takes to rebuild their lives."

BETHEL NEW LIFE, INC.
Chicago, IL

Video

B-roll

Audio

V.O.#1 Bethel New Life is a faith-based organization that provides family support services, economic development, community organizing, and housing. They employ 340 individuals and have a budget of \$10 million dollars. In 1979, the members of Bethel Lutheran Church decided to address the shortage of affordable and safe housing in their west side community. They invested a few dollars to buy three apartment buildings to fix up and they've been building affordable housing ever since. They also provide supportive housing, including a 25-unit building that houses families. They realized that, of the population of homeless needing transitional housing, 40 percent were formerly incarcerated.

Mary Nelson, President
Bethel New Life, Inc.

"Our eyes got opened up about a year ago, when the Department of Justice and the State of Illinois released statistics about our

particular community, Austin and West Garfield. In the next three years, at least 3,000 people will be released from jail into our community each year. In our small area, that's a large number. It made us begin to look around. Our first discovery was that we were already serving ex-offenders during reentry – in our employment center, in our supportive housing, and as an employer ourselves.”

Stephen McCullough, Chief Operating Officer
Bethel New Life, Inc.

“Those families in our supportive housing have a hard time transitioning into permanent housing. One, because of the mere fact they have a record. When property owners and managers run background checks as part of the initial rental screening process, they find that they have a record. That's an automatic cross out in terms of those individuals finding good rental opportunities. The other thing is that Section 8 vouchers do not apply to individuals that have been convicted of felonies. You cannot get a voucher. You cannot even be a part of that subsidy process. If you don't have a job and you can't [obtain a voucher or subsidy], it's really difficult. It's so prohibitive for a family to even get basic housing if you're an ex-offender.”

Kaanaeli Makundi, Director
Bethel Family Wellness Center

“Some of them have been incarcerated and because of that they couldn't get employment. So they are just people who are homeless because they made wrong choices previously and they have to live with that.”

B-roll of Darryl
And his daughter

V.O.#2 While in jail, Darryl's family lost their home and stayed with friends until he got out. Upon release, he wanted desperately to keep his family together.

Darryl Abrams
Bethel Family Wellness Center Resident

“So when I came home, I just called around to different shelters and stuff like that. They said, well, they could accept them but they couldn't accept me. One day I just happened to call them [Bethel]. They told us to come in for an interview and they accepted us all.”

Aamaeli Makundi

“What we try to do is, even if you're homeless, you're still a family member [who] would like to maintain that family with you.”

Darryl Abrams

“I feel that I may be here maybe four to six months. My ultimate goal is to find affordable housing. The job that I am working ... although the title press operator may seem that I make a lot of money, I don't. I started at the bottom for like \$5.48. Now I'm at \$7.40. Today, for affordable housing for a family of five, it may cost maybe \$700-800 a month. Right now, it's just not cutting it.”

B-roll V.O.#3 In the meantime, the Bethel Family Wellness Center provides him and his family clean, safe, and affordable transition housing.

Linda Dortch
Tenant Information Specialist

“My son is four. He just turned four in February. He goes to Bethel day care. And he’s one of the lights in my life. I was in jail for six months. It was six months. I was in a program for substance abuse. After I was released, I had my son. He was three months old at the time. When I was released, there was nowhere for me and my son to go but back into the environment from which I had come. This caused me to go back into the same things I was doing that ended me up in jail.”

B-roll V.O.#4 Linda went from being homeless with her child, to finding a home for both of them at the Bethel Family Wellness Center. She was hired to counsel tenants and was able to attend college and graduate with a 4.0 average. She now lives in her own apartment with her son and husband.

Linda Dortch “It’s nice. I love it.”

Mary Nelson “I think if you look at the cost of a year in prison, it’s at least \$30,000. And it goes on and on and on. It’s not just one year. It’s two years, and five years, and seven years, and ten years. And those costs go on and on. What we say is, it’s penny wise and pound foolish. To simply be throwing people in jail when for half of that money, a one or two-time expenditure, you could turn a life around. Then you wouldn’t have to be looking at jail anymore.”

Linda Dortch “If it had not been for Bethel. This thought is kind of...it’s a scary thought. It kind of scares me, because I don’t know. But I know I wouldn’t be where I am if not for Bethel allowing me to keep my son with me and to grow as I have grown. I wouldn’t have him.”

CORPORATION FOR SUPPORTIVE HOUSING
(Health, Housing and Integrated Services Network)
Oakland, CA

Video

Audio

B-roll

V.O.#1

The California Hotel in Oakland is permanent supportive housing created by the Corporation for Supportive Housing. It is one of nine buildings they provide services to in the San Francisco Bay area. They are working nationally with others who are interested in designing and developing Supportive Housing.

Carol Wilkins
Director, Intergovernmental Policy
Corporation for Supportive Housing

“We help communities create housing with support services for people who’ve been homeless, for people with disabilities who would otherwise be homeless. This strategy for helping communities and homelessness is particularly helping to end long-term homelessness for those folks who would not be able to find stable housing without the kind of support services to help them get back on their feet and re-integrate in the community.”

B-roll

V.O.#2

In 1994, CSH established a program called the Health Housing and Integrated Services Network or HHISN. They built partnerships with housing providers, community clinics, and non-profit organizations to integrate high quality health, social, and vocational services to tenants.

Robert Ratner
Supportive Housing Program Director
Life Long Medical Care

“The program brings health and social services into subsidized housing for predominantly former homeless people with disabilities. We offer the services free of charge to the residents in those buildings. Our main focus is to try to help people retain their housing, but also to improve their overall quality of life.”

Carol Wilkins

“In a couple of our housing projects that were part of the HHSIN, we actually did get consent from tenants to look into their use of services and other systems. We found that 40 percent of them had been in jail at some time during the two years before they entered the supportive housing. That didn’t surprise us at all. When we began this planning, we met with folks from the State Department of Corrections and also some county jail and criminal justice folks. We talked about the needs of people who leave jails or prisons with disabilities and without stable housing to turn to.”

Charlene Overshown, Service Coordinator
Health, Housing and Integrated Services Network

“There’s a program here, CalPEP, with ex-offenders who are coming straight out of prison who are housed here. They have a service staff, a team that services them, but we also service that population that is in here.

B-roll

V.O.#3

Isaac Scott has spent 23 years of his life in and out of prison. He has a number of disabilities that are addressed here at the California Hotel.

Isaac Scott
HHISN Client

“It was just a bunch of different organizations networking, trying to facilitate the convicts’ situation. That’s what they say. And it was wonderful. What happened is, you can imagine somebody being released from prison that doesn’t have any loved ones, any relatives in town. They give you \$200. You have no job. You have no place to stay.”

Carol Wilkins

“What we learned was that a very high percentage of those folks are going to find themselves back in the criminal justice system, very quickly, if they don’t have stable housing. [They need] affordable housing with the support services there to engage them and help address the symptoms of their mental illness, help them with their goals of recovery and their addiction, help them with job training, and help them re-establish income and benefits.”

Charlene Overshown

“There’s on-site case management. Virtually whatever the residents need, even if we have to refer them out to other agencies to get what their particular needs are, that’s what we do here in a nutshell. We have a medical staff that comes in once a week on Thursdays from 1 to 6 o’clock. The folks here in the building are able to access the clinic whether they have insurance or not.”

Robert Ratner

“If you’re talking about people who’ve been institutionalized, ex-offenders or people who’ve been hospitalized in psych hospitals for a long time, or been in skilled nursing facilities, finding places for those folks to go where they’ll have support available makes a huge difference.”

Carol Wilkins

“I think we face a couple of choices. We can continue to spend money on a fragmented approach that basically serves those folks through shelters, hospital emergency rooms, detox programs, then ultimately back to jail. Or we can serve those people in a coordinated way that delivers affordable housing, a decent safe place to live and the support services that folks need to really become members of their community again.”

Susan Herman, Executive Director
National Center for Victims of Crime

“As we are thinking about all of these very worthwhile and very needed programs to help reintegrate offenders and to get them back on track, I think it is appropriate just to say at the same time we should be thinking about very creative and very needed ways to get victims back on track. Victims need the substance abuse counseling, they need the employment training, they need the housing, they need all of this too.”