

The Returning Home Saint Paul Pilot Program

Final Evaluation Report Overview

Prepared by the MNJRC | Amy Dorman, MPP, Research Manager | Spring 2023

Program Overview: The Returning Home Saint Paul (RHSP) pilot was designed as a partnership between the City of Saint Paul, HousingLink, and Ujamaa Place to house Black men aged 18-30 years old who have experienced incarceration. The program sought to increase housing access, bridge the transition from re-entry to self-sufficiency, and mitigate perceived risk for landlords in the housing market. The pilot was a Community-First Public Safety Initiative, and had the goal of housing 20 participants during the pilot period. The pilot launched in December 2020 and enrollment ended in March 2022.

Evaluation Findings:

1. Twelve participants were housed through RHSP program efforts (10 in Saint Paul, two in Minneapolis). Six (60%) of those in Saint Paul **graduated after being housed for 12 months**.
2. Since entering the program, **70%** of participants **have not had additional system involvement**.
3. The pilot spent **under \$6,500** to help house participants and **\$0** of landlord access funds.
4. Securing housing through RHSP helped participants **feel hopeful, supported, and stable**.
5. Participants experienced **many barriers** to searching for, securing, and maintaining housing.
6. **Unpaid rent was challenging** for participants and landlords: 3 of the 5 evictions, mutual terminations, and/or lease non-renewals were due at least in part to accumulated unpaid rent.
7. **All participating landlords had past experience** and/or interest in housing people with barriers in their backgrounds, including criminal records.
8. Landlords' **understanding of federal law** may have hindered some landlords from housing participants with certain offenses.
9. The pilot experienced **challenges when it came to participant recruitment** and graduation, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the limited program geography, and target population.
10. In the fast-moving housing market, **program-partner relationships are crucial** and need support.



Recommendations:

- ✓ Build additional wraparound support and rental assistance into the infrastructure of the program
- ✓ Increase the pipeline of participants
- ✓ Shift to targeted landlord outreach and engagement to help maximize a Saint Paul-specific pool of interested landlords
- ✓ Establish and support relationships between program partners
- ✓ Advocate for policy changes that...
 - Support individuals with harder-to-house offenses
 - Eliminate 8-10 year lookback periods

The RHSP team collaborated with the **Minnesota Justice Research Center (MNJRC)** to assess the program's impact through quantitative outcomes and qualitative feedback from participants and landlords. Due to the small pilot size, findings are not broadly applicable, but the learnings from this evaluation are invaluable in considering the pilot program's strengths and challenges that may impact similar programs and related policies in the City of Saint Paul and beyond.

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