



Housing

Finding a home can be one of the most exciting as well as one of the most challenging parts of reentry. It's definitely one of the most important things to work on, as you'll want to create a stable living environment for yourself. This is another one of the many aspects of reentry that can feel overwhelming since housing can be costly and difficult to find. Hopefully it will become more clear what options are available to you throughout this section.

Throughout the next pages the following will be discussed: multiple housing options, leasing/renting, breaking your lease, and what to do if you're facing housing discrimination.

Housing Options:

As you start your reentry process, finding safe, stable, and affordable housing is crucial. With so many different housing options it can be hard to choose what is right for you. To help you decide what type of housing would suit you, there is a list of various housing options here in Oregon below.

Transitional Housing:

Transitional housing is a great option for anyone who is looking for somewhere to stay while they sort out long term housing plans, find a job, or just get back on their feet. Often times, transitional housing will be referred to as a "halfway house", so if you are hearing about options for halfway houses from family, friends, or online resources they are talking about transitional housing. There can be a lot of benefits of choosing to go into transitional housing out of prison. There are also some transitional homes that may be more specifically catered to your needs, such as transitional homes that focus on addiction support or even life skills training and employment help.

Housing Options

Transitional Housing Continued:

If you decide transitional housing sounds right for you we suggest you evaluate what type of transitional housing you would most benefit from, in terms of programs available. Once you know what you are looking to get out of a transitional housing situation you can look at some websites to find options near you. Some websites we suggest looking at to find the best transitional housing option for you are: 211info.org transitionalhousing.org/state/oregon or hudexchange.info/housing-and-homeless-assistance/.

Emergency Shelters:

Emergency shelters can be a good option for anyone who is experiencing housing instability. Maybe your housing plans fell through, or you realized you couldn't afford to rent and need to figure things out. Maybe you're looking for a place to stay for a bit before you can move somewhere else, or you're just unable to find adequate housing. If any of these situations apply to you, it's worth looking into staying at an emergency shelter. Luckily, there are many emergency shelters in Oregon. Some shelters may be for specific groups of people, like women and children who are victims of domestic abuse, additionally, some shelters may not allow people in who have sex offenses or other violent records. To find a shelter that's accessible for you and close by, you can go to this website: homelesshelterdirectory.org/oregon.html - this website should be able to help you find a shelter in your city.

Stigma Around Shelters & Transitional Housing:

There is definitely an unfortunate social stigma around having to live in a shelter or halfway house, but please understand that there is nothing wrong with seeking this out while you get back on your feet. It is better to have somewhere safe to stay than to not have any shelter. If there are multiple shelters or halfway homes in your location, maybe check out a few and choose whichever feels like the best fit. If you're able to get a job, shelters or halfway houses can be an even better resource for you while you save up some money so that you're able to get your own place.

Housing Options Continued

Subsidized and Affordable Housing:

Subsidized and affordable housing is a good option for those who are ready for a more stable living situation than a shelter or halfway home, but are not in a place where it is an option to rent or buy your own place. Subsidized housing usually works by automatically taking a certain fixed percentage from your paycheck every month. This is a great option to have so that you have the opportunity to live on your own, but there are usually many people looking for subsidized housing. Because of this it's important to do what you can to look for subsidized and affordable housing as soon as possible.

If you think that subsidized or affordable housing could be a good choice for you, you should get more information at hud.gov/states/oregon/renting, oregon.gov/ohcs/housing-assistance/pages/find-affordable-housing.aspx, or lowincomehousing.us/OR.html. These websites should all provide you with different information on subsidized housing in Oregon.

Restrictions on Subsidized Housing:

While the option of subsidized or affordable housing is worth considering, like many of these options there are pros and cons. The biggest thing to keep in mind when deciding if subsidized housing is right for you is the restrictions The Department of Housing and Urban Development has for individuals with a criminal record. They may deny access to subsidized housing if you have a lifetime sex-offender status, have a conviction for producing methamphetamines, felony convictions, violent offenses, and other offenses related to the production of drugs. Background checks are conducted and there's no guarantee of a denial or of an acceptance. They're allowed to deny subsidized housing funds to anyone for any of these reasons. While restrictions exist, it's still worth trying since there's no way of knowing for sure whether or not you'll get subsidized housing unless you try. Try not to be discouraged by these restrictions since many factors play in to whether or not you'll be given access to subsidized housing.



Housing Options Continued

Moving Away:

Moving away is another option worth considering as you try to find the best housing option for you. There are many benefits from moving elsewhere after release, but it is also really difficult to plan to move as you begin the reentry process. If you think moving away is the best housing choice for you, there is a lot to consider and plan for.

Many people who are released from prison return to the same home environment with the same set of circumstances that may have led to their initial incarceration. These factors proved to be detrimental to their behavior prior to incarceration, and having to navigate them during a hard reentry transition is a very likely contributor to the high levels of recidivism we see in our nation. Due to this, for many people who might be worried about having to be in the same potentially harmful community, moving away is a good option. It's been shown that a change of residency can lead to a reduction in recidivism rates.

If you feel moving away is the right option for you, we suggest you start with making a plan. Look into affordable housing options in the cities near you. Find out what employment options exist there. Try to save up money for any expenses you might have. Consider transportation, do you have a car or will you need to find public transportation? All of these things will help you in determining your options to move away.

Housing Options Continued

Private Housing:

If you are in a position where you are ready and able to consider private housing, there are a lot of different options for you across the state of Oregon. Private housing, like all the other types of housing we have discussed so far, has pros and cons. One pro to private housing is it is typically easier to find private housing when compared to subsidized housing. There are a lot of different private housing options in every city to look at and consider. The major con to private housing is it is often the most expensive housing option. Due to this, it is important to make sure you are financially ready and able to move into a private housing option.

If you decide private housing is right for you there are many different online sources you can turn to in order to find the right fit for you. Some websites worth looking at are: [zillow.com](https://www.zillow.com), [apartments.com](https://www.apartments.com), [forrent.com](https://www.forrent.com), [redfin.com](https://www.redfin.com), and [salem.craigslist.org](https://www.salem.craigslist.org). If you do not have access to online resources you can also look in the classified section of your local newspaper, or walk, drive, or bike around town looking for "for rent" signs.

You may face difficulties finding private housing because of your criminal record which may make it challenging to find a landlord willing to rent to you. Some property management companies conduct background checks so it's worth looking at smaller complexes or private homes. If you know anyone on the outside who was formerly incarcerated, they would be incredibly useful sources of information on how to find private housing. It's also worth getting help from any friends or family as well.

Lastly, if you have a sex offense, you're not allowed to live 500 feet within any area that serves children. Please keep this in mind when looking for private housing options.

Housing Options Continued

Leasing or Renting:

After you have done adequate research on renting and leasing a home, you can begin contacting landlords to view different places and discuss lease agreements. If the landlord or apartment manager gets back to you about a time to meet up, make sure you arrive on time, dressed appropriately, and bring any relevant materials you might need. It is important to make a good first impression and by doing these things you will show you are responsible and care about hearing more about their property.

It's important for your financial safety that you don't pay anyone before you see the place you are looking to rent in person, and are probably beginning to fill out paperwork. Paperwork to fill out could include a rental application which sometimes have fees. Be sure to fill it out correctly and answer any questions honestly. Applications typically cover information like: social security number, your current employer, current address, and rent history. You may also be asked for references and can use the same references listed on your job application. Additionally, it's recommended to answer questions on your criminal background honestly to potentially save time on the background check. It won't automatically disqualify you, and it's always better to be forthcoming than to have them find out on their own. It's better to hear it from you directly alongside the work you're doing now to lead a better life. A final tip on the process of hunting for a place to rent is to be nice to landlords/apartment managers/etc. even if they're not offering you the place right then and there. They may offer it to someone else who cancels and choose to ask if you're still interested later on.

If you are able to find a home in your budget and sign for the apartment/house, great! Leases are typically a year long and your rent is set at a consistent price per month for that year. Rental agreements differ because they are usually a month to month payment arrangement, every 30 days either you or the landlord are allowed to back out of this arrangement.



Housing Options Continued

Leasing or Renting Continued:

It's important to thoroughly go through your leasing or renting agreement to ensure you can uphold your end of the bargain, these are legally binding agreements. You should hang on to a copy of any and all important documents related to your lease or rental agreement. You may be required to pay a downpayment as well as the first month's rent when you begin to move in, oftentimes along with a security deposit. Security deposits are meant to insure you for any natural wear and tear over the time that you live on this property. Leftover money from this deposit is typically mailed to you.

Breaking Your Lease:

If for some reason your plans change and you find yourself needing to move out before your agreed upon lease ends, there are options to end your lease. You are not stuck until the lease ends, however, you will likely be responsible for paying a fee for breaking the lease. The amount of the fee can usually be found on the lease agreement, but if it is not, it is a good idea to talk to your landlord and figure out what that amount is. In some cases it might even be continuing to pay rent until the space is filled, so it's best to find out what the fee is and come up with a plan for how to pay it even if you do not end up needing to break your lease.

What To Do if You Face Housing Discrimination:

Unfortunately, many people face housing discrimination. Due to this, The Department of Housing and Urban Development took action to help prevent housing discrimination for people with criminal records. It is important to know and understand your rights so you do not get unlawfully discriminated against. New guidelines state that landlords have to prove that they are reasonably protecting other tenants or their property from someone wanting to move into that property, rather than being able to turn someone down with a criminal background upfront. It is also illegal to discriminate on the basis of age, color, religion, sex, national origin, and disability.