



Housing is Survival

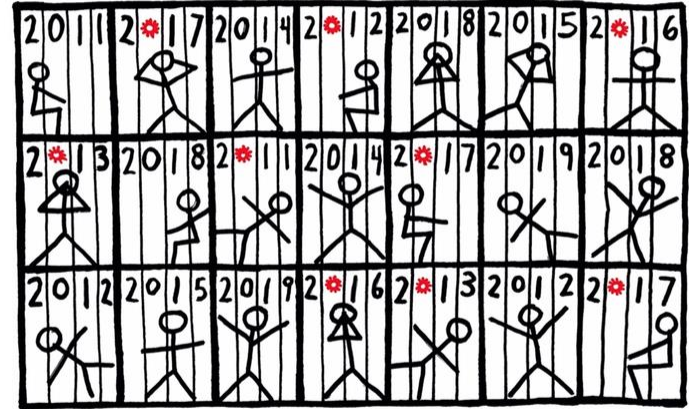
Meaningful Access for People on Criminal Registries

Isabella Mancini, LCSW, RDDP
she/her

Your presenter

- Working in homeless services in Chicago since 2013
- Community organizing with two local organizations fostering community with formerly incarcerated people, specifically LGBTQ+ people, and people required to register
- Work with this population intensified during COVID as we tried to get more people released, and as ESG / ARPA funds rolled out rapidly to house people

**1200 people past their outdates
are dying for release**



Illinois Department of Corrections

How about NOW?



Space Guidelines

- Person first language - people are not defined by their worst act, or by harm they have caused
- Curiosity is at the center - ask and answer with respect and grace
- Take the space you need and take breaks if you need
- What is said here stays here, what is learned here leaves here
- Honor lived experience



Why should we care about this?

- Housing is a human right and housing is healthcare
- There are inevitable intersections between homelessness, involvement in the criminal justice system, white supremacy, and homophobia/transphobia
- Housing first is a philosophy centered around the idea that people are better able to grow, work on goals, and recover when they are first housed
- Public conviction registries keep people homeless while simultaneously criminalizing homelessness
- People sleeping outside does not keep ANYONE safe from harm

Who are we talking about



S: 64 year old white cisgender male, stage 4 cirrhosis, SMI, SUD; released from prison in 1997; stayed in transitional housing for 2 years after which he has been homeless since 1999. Predominantly sleeps between the airport and public transit. Registers weekly on the sex offense registry.

“The word “rehabilitate” means to be returned to your previous rank or status in society. This never happens because of the way registry laws are set up.”

K: 34 year old black cisgender female, living with co-occurring SUD/SMI. Homeless since late teens, 6 kids none in her custody; currently facing 2 counts of aggravated arson which will require registration on the arson registry.

S: 34 year old black and latina transgender female, living with co-occurring SMI/SUD. Served about 12 years on a 4 year sentence due to housing banishment laws, and is still required to register despite getting her sentence vacated and reduced; works full time as a manager at Chipotle

Who are we talking about, cont.



J: 47 year old black cisgender male, severe abscesses on his shins and chronic arthritis, SMI, SUD. Released from original conviction in early 2000s, gone in and out several times on administrative violations. Sleeps between public transit and occasionally a friend's house, but needs the fire department to bring him up and down the stairs. Registers weekly on the sex offense registry.

L: 44 year old latina transgender woman, C-PTSD and anger management issues. Released in 2023 after 20+ years incarcerated. Required to register on the Violence Against Youth Registry. Lost multiple jobs due to background checks after hiring and starting; working in fast food despite multiple paralegal certs obtained while incarcerated

B: 30 year old latina cisgender woman, ESL, released from prison in 2023 and required to register weekly on the sex offense registry. Sleeps between her boyfriend's house and outside of a few churches. On SSI, SMI and developmental disability. Boyfriend is undocumented and unable to work.

National context - Incarceration & Registries



LGBTQ incarceration rate is 3x higher than the general population rate, Static-99R assigns more points to same-sex interactions and prior convictions

Black people make up 22% of publicly listed registrants, but 13% of the US population

The Sex Offense Registry: found in all 50 states and upheld by federal law - the most well known and the most pervasive

Violent Offender Registry - also referred to as the murder registry, the violence against youth registry, or similar names depending on the state - found in many states

The Gun Offender registry - Chicago (public), NYC, Baltimore, DC; Connecticut (Deadly Weapon)

The Arson Registry

Most registries carry a 3-10 year registration requirement, with felony penalties for failure to register

The Sex Offense Registry is either 10 years or lifetime in most states

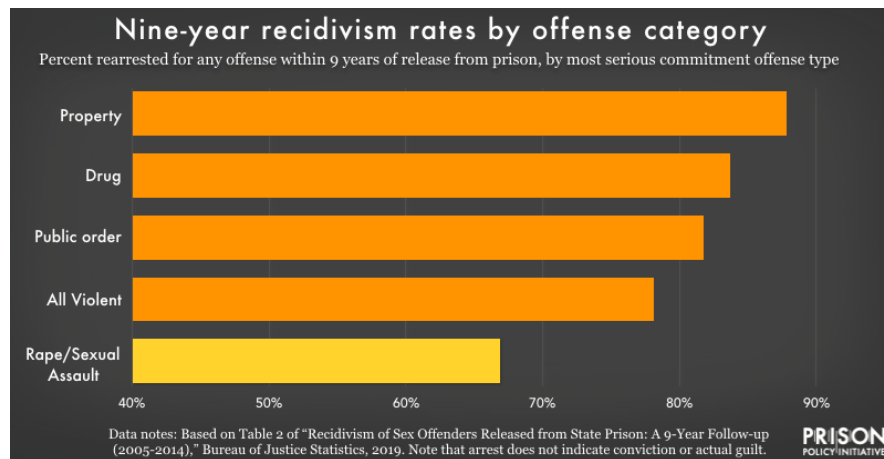
If you are violated for failure to register, your count restarts when you are released

National context - Return to Incarceration

Per a report published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, people with sex offenses are much less likely to be re-arrested for another sex offense (about 7.7%) than for another type of crime, most specifically public order (59%)

Per the Sentencing Project, only about 2% of people convicted of murder are re-convicted for the same charge

In general, people with “violent crime” convictions are significantly less likely to be re-arrested or re-convicted for charges of the same or similar nature



National context - Impact



- Home address publicly available on registry
- Police district informing neighbors that someone on a registry is moving into their neighborhood
- Housing banishment - anywhere from 250-2000 feet
- Indication on ID and / or passport
- Blanket bans from PHAs (federal requirement for SO); at least 13 for Arson
- Forced removal from household with children
- Stigma
- Violence
- Return to incarceration for administrative violations (public order)
- No statistically significant decrease in harm or violence since registries have popularized
- Many initial proponents of registries have since renounced their positions

Local context



One in every 212 men in Illinois is listed on the sex offense registry.

- **One in every 84 Black men** in Illinois is listed on the sex offense registry.

One in every 147 men in Illinois is listed on a public conviction registry.

- **One in every 42 Black men** in Illinois is listed on a public conviction registry.

1 in 5 people listed on the sex offense registry in Chicago is homeless.

- **80% of those homeless are Black men** who stay on the west and south sides of Chicago

53% of people required to register weekly have received at least one failure to register felony in the past 10 years

Local context - laws

Sex Offense Registry

- 500 feet housing banishment - schools, daycares, and parks
- Quarterly or annual registration for someone with an address, and weekly registration for someone without an address
- No protection under fair housing laws

Violent Offense Against Youth and Murder

- 10 years, same address requirements
- Annual unless homeless

Gun Offender: 4 years

Arson: 10 years

PER 730 ILCS 150/3 (a) 2, AS A HOMELESS SEX OFFENDER I AM REQUIRED TO REGISTER WEEKLY AND AS PART OF MY WEEKLY REGISTRATION I AM TO DOCUMENT ALL LOCATIONS AND TIMES WHERE I HAVE STAYED DURING THE PAST 7 DAYS, INCLUDING ALL VEHICLE INFORMATION (IF APPLICABLE).

DATES:	ADDRESSES/LOCATIONS:	START TIME-ENDTIME:
10-1-18	95th St. Red line - blue line	6:56pm 4:00am
10-2-18	Forest Park blue line - Red line	10:00pm 5:00am
10-3-18	35th St Red line - blue line	9:00pm 6:30am
10-4-18	Cicero blue line - Red line	11:00pm 5:30am
10-5-18	67th St Red line - blue line	12:00am 6:00am
10-6-18	Forest Park blue line - Red line	1:00am 6:00am
10-7-18	95th St Red line - blue line	11:30pm 5:00am

LICENSE PLATE NUMBER _____

MODEL _____

MAKE _____

Local context - access to services & opportunities for growth

“I’m an elderly, disabled individual who has applied for disability benefits and am still awaiting a decision. I have difficulties getting around – I’ve been using a cane and have had spine, back, leg, and hip challenges for some time. I fractured my spine and some days it’s hard to walk a long distance, especially without my cane. It’s hard for me to ... make multiple trips to the CPD registration office”

“The rules here are tough, but for me they are even tougher because I’m a transgender woman unable to be myself.”

“I am not employed because no one wants to hire someone like me.”

Blanket bans from most shelters, every respite in cook county, most inpatient treatment facilities, recovery homes, nursing homes, etc

Local context - housing access

“They don’t see you as a trans woman, they see you as the name you got locked up with, so it’s difficult. Living with my grandma, she sees me as who I am, who I identify as. But I can’t have this because the 500-foot banishment zone means I can’t live with her.”

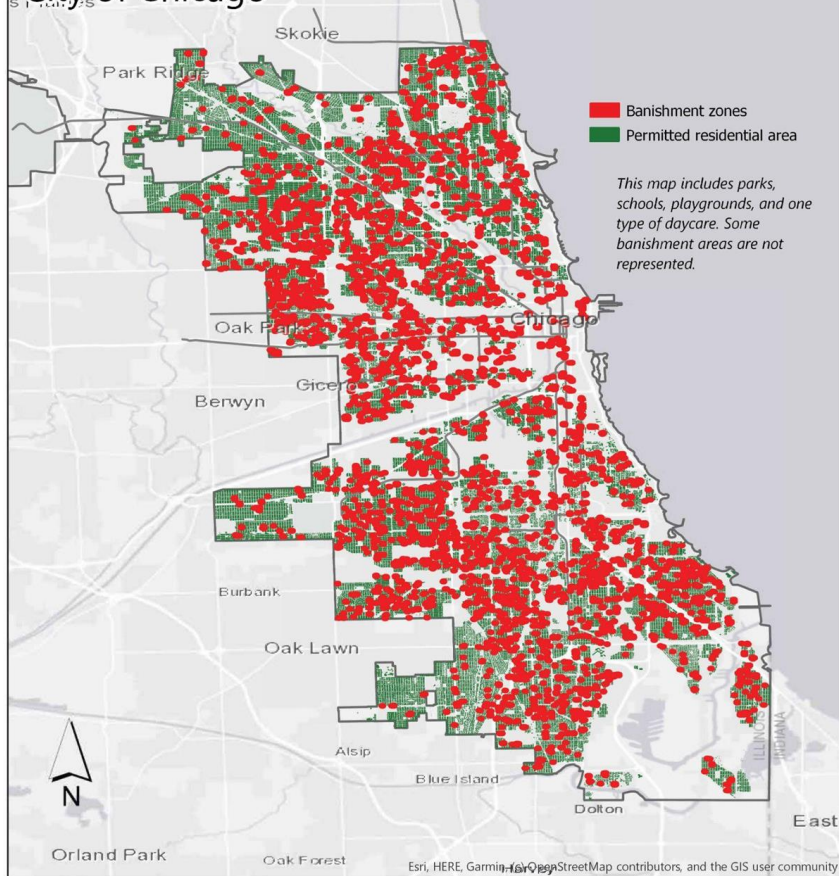
“draconian restrictions on where the apartment must be located further exacerbates exclusion from the housing market. I have had multiple housing opportunities fall through because the apartment was arbitrarily a few feet too close to a childcare center or a school”

“People on the registry are also excluded from the vast majority of subsidized housing opportunities - SRN/CHA etc. which further excludes them from society. Thus we are relegating people on the registry to homelessness, which is not in anyone's interests, and does not encourage genuine healing, or community accountability.”

“This client lived in his apartment for 19 years and was the model tenant. A daycare opened next door to his apartment building. Because my client was over 60 years old and illiterate and had no family to depend on he had no place to go. He was arrested and was sleeping in an abandoned building until we could find a program that would accept him.”

“For the population of folks who are listed on registries, and in particular sex offense registries, their inability to access housing is definitely a concern for us. As I stated above, homelessness makes individuals more vulnerable to acquiring chronic illnesses like HIV and also leads to poor health outcomes. Furthermore, it’s no coincidence that the same populations most impacted by HIV are also impacted by the criminal legal system (Black men, Black trans women, Black

Illinois Housing Banishment Laws, City of Chicago



Housing banishment laws prohibit residing within 500 feet of any: school, playground, full or part-time child/day care home or center, license-exempt daycare, address holding a daycare license, facility providing programs or services exclusively for <18. Home and license-exempt daycares are common, but the locations are not available, so they are not represented in this map. This map is for informational purposes only and does not constitute an official map of the City of Chicago. It is not intended to be used for legal purposes.



What barriers do you see in your cities?

- Who is most impacted?
- What are the laws?
- How do social service agencies contribute to these barriers?
- What else?



5-10 minute group chat

Client service level

Agency level

Systems level



Client level

Person first language

Learn the laws

Do the work - don't make the client do all the work

Unlearn stigma

Bystander intervention

Connecting to local advocacy and connecting your clients

Agency level



Education across the agency

Thoughtfulness about property acquisition

What grants are being applied for

Blanket bans

Landlord relationships

“We believe housing is a human right and that housing is healthcare. This belief guides our work to end the HIV epidemic and to work to end homelessness. We know that people aren’t going to be able to do things like take daily prevention or treatment medications when they don’t even know where they’re going to lay their heads at night. So to us, the issues of housing and healthcare aren’t separate, they’re inherently connected. When we work together to end homelessness, we’re making real progress to ending the HIV epidemic. When I think about what needs to be improved, it seems like there’s a real lack of understanding about how unproductive registries are and there also seems to be some serious dehumanization of folks listed on registries as well. We’re supportive of the Chicago 400’s bill (SB2158) which advocates for a number of important changes for this group” –Advocacy Manager at AFC



Systems Level

Supporting and leading legislation that mitigates the harm of registries

Pave the way for more inclusive grants

Prioritize this population WITHIN reentry RFPs

PHAs - can anything be done?

Safe havens - no new funding, but possibility of altering background limitations?

Shifting coordinated entry prioritization to include people on registries

Resources

The Feminist and The Sex Offender: Confronting Sexual Harm, Ending State Violence - Erica Meiners & Judith Levine (Verso Books)

Prison By Any Other Name - Maya Schenwar & Victoria Law (The New Press)

Prison Policy Initiative (prisonpolicy.org)

The Sentencing Project (sentencingproject.org)

National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (narsol.org)

The Chicago 400 (chicago400.net)

Reach out to me! imancini@hascares.org

