



KANSAS

KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
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AGENCIES PARTNER TO MAXIMIZE RETURNING OFFENDER HOUSING OPTIONS

The Kansas Department of Corrections has partnered with the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation to provide a much-needed service to returning offenders. The agencies have jointly hired two corrections professionals to manage offender reentry housing issues. The initiative, designed to help offenders access safe and affordable housing, is a good example of the multidisciplinary approach that is so fundamental to reentry programming.

As Secretary of Corrections Roger Werholtz stated, “If the Department of Corrections has learned one thing from our reentry and risk reduction efforts, it is the value of interagency collaboration. We have prospective partners in the public and private sectors who are willing to support the department’s commitment to public safety. Their dedication and expertise takes comprehensive reentry and risk reduction planning to a higher level.”

The appointees are Carrie Harris and Carla Wozniak. Carrie Harris was previously a classroom instructor for the Topeka Moving Ahead Program, a Kansas Legal Services initiative which administers services to the chronically homeless and under or unemployed. Carla Wozniak worked as a Homeless Outreach coordinator at Bert Nash, Douglas County’s community mental health center.

The Kansas Department of Corrections began its reentry efforts in 2003 with the opening of the Shawnee County Reentry Program. With the support of the legislature and various national organizations, the program has expanded to include the Sedgwick County Reentry Program and the Statewide Reentry Program. The Kansas Housing Resources Corporation has been a valuable partner in the program’s progress, having previously shared a Reentry Housing Specialist with KDOC. The addition of a second housing specialist will address an urgent need in Kansas by focusing on one of the key issues that is crucial to the success of returning offenders. Department of Justice statistics show that without stable employment and housing upon their release from prison, offenders are more likely to commit new crimes.

According to Kansas Housing Resources Corporation President Steve Weatherford, “Our goal is to build lives, not prisons. By educating offenders about obtaining stable housing, we’re helping these individuals become productive members of society and reducing the chance they’ll return to crime and drug abuse.”

The Kansas Housing Resources Corporation is a subsidiary of the Kansas Development Finance Authority and was formed by Governor’s Executive Reorganization Order (ERO) #30, pursuant to Kansas Statutes Annotated 74-8904 (v). The agency’s mission is to enhance Kansas communities with housing opportunities. That includes providing housing opportunities for an often under-represented segment of the population, returning offenders.

Carrie Harris will work with offenders, case managers and property managers to provide housing services focusing on Shawnee and Wyandotte counties. Carla Wozniak will provide similar services as well as policy, planning and training services statewide.

For more information on the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation, visit their website at: <http://www.kshousingcorp.org/>.