



Returning to New York City after Incarceration

WILL I BE PREVENTING FROM LIVING IN PUBLIC HOUSING IF I HAVE A CRIMINAL RECORD?

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) can exclude applicants based on their conviction record. NYCHA conducts a criminal background check on every applicant and member of the applicant's household over the age of 16. Persons subject to a lifetime registration requirement under a state sex offender registration program are permanently excluded from NYCHA housing. Other periods of ineligibility are based on the severity of the conviction, ranging from two years for violations or DWI infractions to six years for class A, B or C felonies. These time periods are measured starting when any parole or probation is completed and any fine has been paid.

NYCHA must take into account the time, nature, and extent of the behavior that was the basis of a conviction, and must look at factors that might indicate a reasonable probability of favorable future conduct. To do this, NYCHA must consider any evidence of rehabilitation and willingness to participate in social service or counseling programs. This proof can include enrollment in support programs, proof of employment, letters of recommendation from community members such as clergy, proof of ongoing drug testing in which you have tested negative, or any other documentation of your positive steps. If you show that you have been rehabilitated and are likely to show favorable conduct in the future, NYCHA should find you eligible for public housing.

For more information on applying for public housing, please visit:
http://www.nyc.gov/html/nycha/html/assistance/app_for_pubhsg.shtml

HOW DO I FIND A JOB?

Connections 2007 is an informational guide to agencies that help find jobs for those who have served time in prison. For example, The Fortune Society may be able to assist you in discharge/re-entry planning, in addition to finding support groups for former inmates. This guide can be found at any public library, or you can read the book online at this website: www.nypl.org/branch/services/connections/. You can also request that the library send you a copy by writing to:

Correctional Library Services
The New York Public Library
455 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016

HOW CAN I START A SMALL BUSINESS OR GET A STREET VENDOR'S LICENSE?

In order for a business to operate legally in New York City, it must be licensed by the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA). The DCA website offers useful information about getting a business license, the relevant laws and rules applicable to the license categories and frequently asked questions about the application process. You can visit the website via this link <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dca/html/licenses/licenses.shtml>. You can also visit the DCA Licensing Center in person at 42 Broadway, 5th Floor, in Lower Manhattan, or call 311, New York City's 24-hour Citizen Service Center.

In March 2008, Mayor Michael Bloomberg signed Local Law 9, which established 1,000 permits for Green Carts. Green Carts are mobile food carts that sell raw fruits and vegetables at designated areas within

each of the five boroughs. To operate a Green Cart, you need both a mobile food vending license and a Green Cart permit. For more information on the application process, call 311 and ask for “Green Carts Permit” and/or “Green Carts Waiting List Application” or visit this link: http://home2.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cdp/cdp_pan_green_carts.shtml. The DCA also offers information on how to become a Green Cart mobile food vendor including the costs and financial assistance available.

If you are interested in becoming a general mobile food vendor or a general merchandise vendor (also referred to as a “peddler”), be advised that all available permits have been issued. The waiting list for a general merchandise vendor license is closed, except for veterans or their surviving spouses, who may get a vendor license for free. Because the wait-list for a food cart permit is very long, you might want to consider adding your name to the wait-list for a food vending permit in a specific borough, or applying for a seasonal food vending permit, which is awarded on a lottery basis.

HOW DO I GET HELP FOR A CIVIL LEGAL PROBLEM?

Check online or go to www.lawhelp.org, which lists all free and low-cost legal service providers in New York City organized by zip code and problem area. Internet access is available at public libraries.