



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

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## **City of Riverside's Project Connect to Help Jail Inmates Avoid Homelessness**

*City hires Victory Outreach Church to provide services to inmates re-entering society*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Inmates at the Robert Presley Detention Center who might become homeless when released will be connected to programs and services that can help them stay self-sufficient when they no longer are in custody.

The City Council approved an agreement Tuesday (1/17) evening with Victory Outreach Church to provide the services through Project Connect to inmates who describe themselves as homeless or in danger of becoming homeless.

The program is important because 20 percent of respondents to the most recent local Point-in-Time Count described themselves as having been involved with the justice system. National research has shown that people leaving jail or prison are at high risk of becoming homeless.

“One of the most important things we can do to address homelessness is prevention,” said Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson, whose office suggested the approach. “We must work not only toward getting people off the streets, but also find innovative ways to keep people from becoming homeless in the first place.”

The program emphasizes coordination between Victory Outreach, the city's Office of Homeless Solutions and the Riverside County Sheriff's Department. Homeless Solutions Officer Dr. Lorissa Villarreal has been approved by the Sheriff to work with inmates inside the Presley Center.

The Office of Homeless Solutions will work with Victory Outreach to ensure people leaving the jails have assistance in overcoming potential barriers, including a lack of employment opportunities, housing discrimination, and the need for support and resources to navigate the future.

“This pro-active approach will assist individuals with a justice background towards forging a new path,” Mayor Pro Tem Clarissa Cervantes said. “As a member of the Housing and Homeless Committee, we are exploring all pathways to ensure we can remove any barriers in our city that limit

access to housing, and that includes finding ways to support people who have gone through the justice system. Victory Outreach is a committed partner that makes a difference in people's lives.”