



The Diane Wade House

The Diane Wade House is the first-of-its-kind, Afrocentric transitional housing program for adult women involved in the criminal justice system in Multnomah County. The home will provide gender-responsive, trauma-informed services. This means that residents, who must be referred to the program, will have access to culturally specific mental health stabilization and support services.

In addition to dormitory-style housing, the Diane Wade House will offer a variety of daytime services, including mentoring and life-skills programs. It is intended to be a low-barrier, transitional housing program, with eligibility requirements designed to reduce barriers to entry rather than place undue burdens on those who need housing and services.

The home is part of an overall Multnomah County strategy to reduce unnecessary incarceration and reduce the number of African Americans who are over-represented in the [criminal justice](#) system. It also provides an alternative for people with [behavioral health issues](#) who would benefit more from community-based services than from jail.

The home will serve 38 justice-involved women referred by the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice and Multnomah County Mental Health and Addiction Services. Thirty-two of those beds are funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation through [the Safety and Justice Challenge \(SJC\)](#). The SJC seeks to reduce over-reliance on jail across the country. In 2017, Multnomah County was awarded a \$2 million grant to support efforts to reduce unnecessary incarceration without compromising public safety — focusing on those struggling with mental health or addiction issues.

Who was Diane Wade?

Diane Wade was a Multnomah County parole and probation officer. She was a leader in the African American community and best known for her advocacy and passion for justice-involved women. Wade worked with adults in Multnomah County from May 1999 until she passed away in October 2010. Most of her work was with women of color as a lead parole and probation officer with the Department of Community Justice's [African American Program](#) as well as the Gang Unit.

What does the data show?

A 2016 report released by Multnomah County, in partnership with [the MacArthur Safety and Justice Challenge](#), showed that jail use in Multnomah County disproportionately affects people of color. African Americans are six times more likely than Whites to be in jail, despite accounting for roughly 6 percent of the County's population.

A study in 2015, the [Mental Health Jail Diversion Feasibility Study](#), found that African Americans who struggle with mental illness also are over-represented in jail. And data provided by the County's Department of Community Justice in 2017 showed that women with mental illness were sanctioned to jail more frequently on probation violations than women who were not struggling with mental health concerns. Once in jail, women with mental illness also stayed longer.

This disparity led Multnomah County's public safety partners to create a program tailored for women involved in the justice system, particularly women of color.

How does it work?

Clients will be referred to the Diane Wade House by parole and probation officers in the Department of Community Justice and case managers from Mental Health and Addictions Services Forensic Diversion Program. Participants will be identified as someone struggling with mental health and/or substance use disorders, with an interest in becoming engaged in supportive housing services to stabilize in the community.

Bridges to Change, a long-established, community-based organization, will operate the program and provide mentoring, case management and life-skills programs. Bridges to Change will also contract with outside agencies and facilitators to provide in-house, culturally specific programming to meet individual client needs. Participants will live at the Diane Wade House as they prepare to transition back to the community.

What are eligibility requirements?

Candidates must be at least 18 years old. They must be assessed as having a high-risk of reoffending and a high need for mental health and/or substance abuse services. Priority will be given to candidates who:

- are African American
- have a pending jail sanction while on supervision
- have a history of trauma, substance use or mental illness.

Will women of other ethnicities and races be able to participate in the program?

Yes. The program's goal is to reduce the over-representation of African Americans in jail, but women of all ethnicities are eligible for entry to the Diane Wade House.

Where will it be located?

The Diane Wade House is located in Gresham. The home is located near services such as the county's community corrections offices and local service providers to enhance client access to services.

When will it open?

The Diane Wade House opened in December 2018.

Were members of the community involved in the crafting of the program?

Yes. As part of community-involvement requests from both the MacArthur Safety and Justice Challenge and the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners, community members are providing input and feedback for the women's program. This includes women who are currently or previously involved in the justice system.

The Department of Community Justice will also launch a Community Advisory Board, made up of justice-involved women, to help guide ongoing program development and operations. The Advisory Board will include a current resident of the Diane Wade House.

If you have any further questions about the Diane Wade House, please contact

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Photo of
Diane Wade

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