

General Assistance Emergency Housing and Office of Economic Opportunity Shelter Programs



Presentation for the Senate Committee on
Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs
Chris Winters, DCF Commissioner

General Assistance Emergency Housing (“motel voucher”)

General Assistance and Emergency Housing program has a Shelter First goal.

Provides emergency housing in a hotel/motel when no alternative shelter is available

Eligibility/access through Economic Services or 2-1-1 (after hours)

- “Catastrophic” up to 84 nights or “Vulnerable” up to 28 nights, depending on eligibility
- Adverse Weather Conditions during winter months
- Cohort, refers to a group of clients who were living in a hotel/motel in June 30th, 2023 and were provided an extension to stay in the hotel/motel through April 1st, 2024.

The “Cohort” Big Picture (as of 3/25/2024)



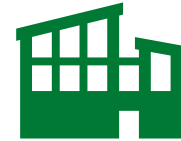
1,289

Number of households in the 6/30 cohort on June 30



468

Number of households in the 6/30 cohort on March 25



823

Number of households transitioned out of 6/30 cohort since July 1



\$80

Average nightly rate this week

Recent GA Changes by the Legislature – Budget Adjustment Act (BAA)

Changes in eligibility:

- People who qualify under act 81 cohort
 - Vulnerable or Catastrophic; were to exit 4/1; Less than 500 HH; Down from 1250 HH
- Traditional GA rules
 - Vulnerable or Catastrophic; 28 and 84 day limits; 185 HH
- Those in under Adverse Weather Conditions meeting one of the above categories or under newly expanded eligibility based on a disability or medical condition confirmed by a qualified health care provider
- Of the approximately 2500 individuals, we identified 500 who were not in the V or C to be exited 3/15
- Approximately half have requalified using the new form
- All of the above will remain in the hotel / motel through June 30

The GA Big Picture (as of 3/25/2024)



1,590

Total number of households in GA Housing



468

Number of households from the 6/30 cohort



1095

Number of households as Categorically Eligible



27

Number of households for adverse weather

GA Hotel / Motel Numbers

Housing as of 03/25/2024

District Office	Total Eligible Households	Cohort Households*	Categorically Eligible***	Adverse Weather Conditions**
Barre District Office	181	61	118	2
Bennington District Office	174	66	107	1
Brattleboro District Office	215	55	141	19
Burlington District Office	281	76	204	1
Hartford District Office	74	34	40	0
Middlebury District Office	20	6	14	0
Morrisville District Office	28	8	19	1
Newport District Office	23	5	17	1
Rutland District Office	420	118	301	1
Springfield District Office	54	19	35	0
St Albans District Office	65	13	51	1
St Johnsbury District Office	55	7	48	0
Total	1590	468	1095	27

Key concerns with the motel system

Inconsistent access to onsite support for services

Service and healthcare providers have safety concerns providing services onsite at some locations

Health and safety concerns in general; condition of hotels

Concerns of exploitation and abuse of guests

Movement across districts de-stabilizes health and social services

Inconsistent amenities (kitchen, laundry, etc.)

High costs for low return

The current hotel/motel program is expensive:

\$132 Average nightly rate the week of 12/26/2023

That's about \$4,000/month without providing any services.

Common services at shelters include:

Case Management	Ability to receive mail
Housing Navigation	Access to a computer
Warm meals	Connection to Recovery coaching
Laundry facility	Job Readiness workshops
Health/mental health care	Substance use treatment

Housing Opportunity Grant Program

Funding for community organizations who help people in crisis to find or keep stable, safe housing

- \$27 million of state and federal funding (current year)
- OEO partners with over 40 programs
- SFY24 includes \$7.8 in one-time funds (predominantly funding emergency shelter and financial assistance)

Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP)

SFY24 HOP Awards Summary

Emergency Shelter, Operations & Essential Services (seasonal, year-round, DV, motel pool, emergency apartments, day shelters, extreme cold weather shelters)

Transitional Housing

Homelessness Prevention (Services)

Rapid Re-housing (Services, Rental Assistance)

Coordinated Entry Assessment & Housing Navigation

Innovation

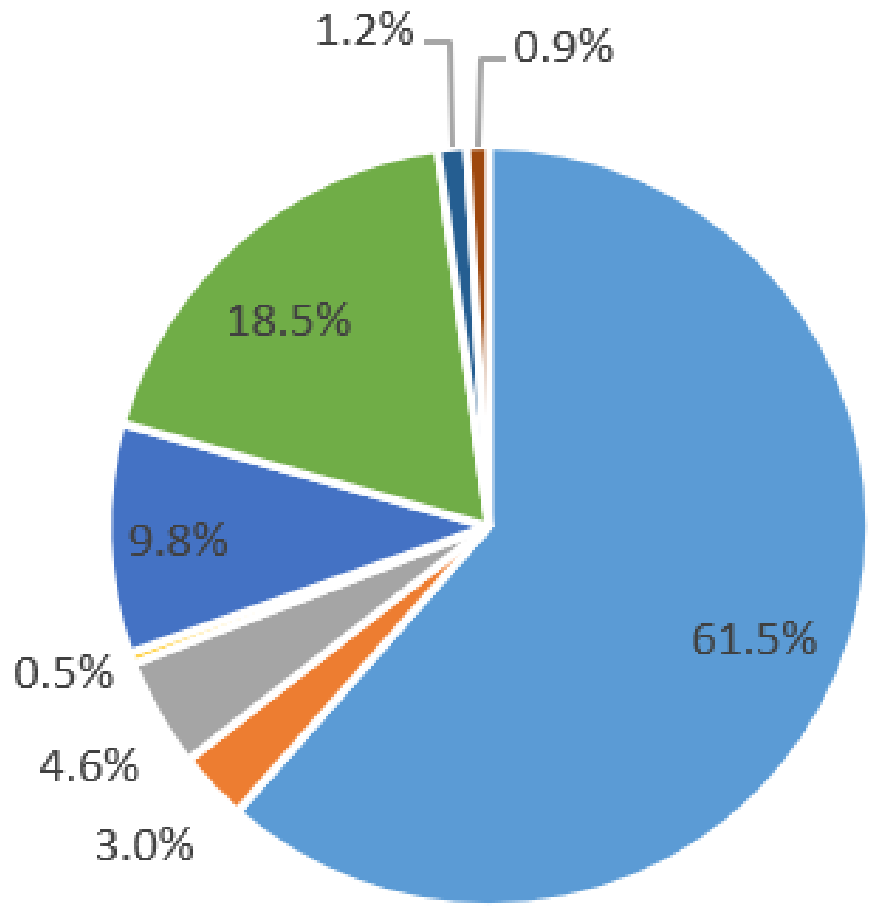
Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

Flexible Client-Based Financial Assistance

HOP SFY24 Awards

SFY24 Awards

- Emergency Shelter
- Rapid Re-Housing
- Homelessness Prevention
- Transitional Housing
- Coordinated Entry Assessment & Housing Navigation
- Financial Assistance
- Innovation
- HMIS



HOP Grant Status update

One-time HOP funding was prioritized for:

- Flexible Client Financial Assistance to help homeless or at-risk households stabilize in housing (e.g., security deposits, rental arrears, transportation, fees, etc.)
 - Approx 70% of SFY24 funding through one-time funds
- Day shelter expansion to address unsheltered homelessness, including food
- Staffing to expand housing navigation services
- Expanding rapid re-housing

The Annual [HOP Award Summary](#) is available online:

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/oeo/resources/awards> (Updated November 14, 2023)

Emergency Shelter Capacity

County	Total Household Capacity
Addison	62
Bennington	30
Caledonia	31
Chittenden	148
Franklin	23
Lamoille	19
Orleans	7
Rutland	19
Washington	93
Windham	66
Windsor	36
Grand Total	534

Note: Vermont is a shelter first state. That means these beds are all filled before someone is offered General Assistance Emergency Housing.



Shelter Expansion



The administration's budget includes \$7.1 million in additional base funding in SFY25 to support emergency shelter capacity at 8 projects for approximately 180 households through the Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP) administered by the DCF Office of Economic Opportunity.



These projects are supporting community providers with track records for offering emergency shelter in their communities. They reflect an array of settings and have been developed thoughtfully to meet the needs of guests and align with best practices.

Five emergency shelter projects have been supported in SFY24 with one-time funding.



These projects will not be able to continue into SFY25 without this funding:

Seasonal shelter in Montpelier (15)

Year-round shelter in St. Johnsbury (24)

Young Adult emergency apartments in Brattleboro (4)

Preservation of a shelter project in Burlington (35)

Conversion of youth shelter in Burlington from seasonal to year-round (10)

New emergency shelter capacity in SFY25

These projects have been supported via planning, construction, or other state funding in SFY24 and will not be able to open in SFY25 without this funding (approximately 100 households):

Rutland AHS District

Brattleboro AHS District

Hartford AHS District

Temporary Shelters to Support GA Transition

One-time, temporary shelters anticipated to be paid for through \$2.3 million one-time funding and \$4 million BAA:

Winston Prouty Center for Child & Family Development

- 20 rooms for families with children (40-48 individuals)
- Approximately 17 months

Capstone Community Action

- 3 emergency shelter apartments (7 bedrooms)
- 15 months
- One-time leases

Waterbury Armory

- Congregate shelter (40 individuals)

Mobile Units

- 46 beds per site, up to three sites (138 individuals)

Additional Discussions Underway

New Permanent Supportive Housing Benefit

Benefit Categories	Descriptions of Direct Services available to participants. Goal – January 2025, 100 participants
Pre-Tenancy Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing needs and preferences• Assistance with locating and applying for housing• Housing support plan development• Assistance in securing resources and benefits
Tenancy Sustaining Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistance with maintaining benefits• Connections to community resources• Supports to develop independent living skills• Eviction prevention services
Community Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Home modifications to improve accessibility• Security deposits• Moving expenses• Essential household furnishings• Pest eradications

Family Supportive Housing Program

Supportive housing for families experiencing homelessness

Program components

- Permanent housing (MOU with housing providers)
- Intensive, home-based services (small caseloads)
- Financial empowerment support (banking, credit, savings)
 - Referrals for FSH come through the Coordinated Entry process (families experiencing homelessness).

9 community providers, 372-465 families

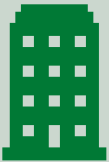
- Family Center of Washington County (Barre AHS District)
- Sunrise Family Resource Center (Bennington AHS District)
- Winston Prouty Center (Brattleboro AHS District)
- COTS/Howard Center (Burlington AHS District)
- Upper Valley Haven (Hartford AHS District)
- John Graham Housing & Services (Middlebury AHS District)
- *In discussion (Morrisville AHS District)*
- Northeast Kingdom Community Action (Newport & St. Newport AHS Districts)
- Homeless Prevention Center (Rutland AHS District)
- Winston Prouty Center (Springfield AHS District)
- Pathways Vermont (St. Albans AHS District)



HOME Family Housing Voucher

Project launched in January 2023 to help families with children exit homelessness.

As of 2/2/24, 96 families have exited homelessness and moved into an apartment with a HOME voucher.



Landlord Relief Program launched February 2023

Through December 2023, 215 approval applications (\$777,835); average \$5,179 per landlord.



Vermont Rental Subsidy program expansion for Reach Up families (\$1.5M).

143 Reach Up Families received a short-term subsidy that will continue through June 2024.

AHS Efforts – Team-based Care

Move existing programs into place faster

- Shift the focus of DA crisis staff to hotel/motels
- Support the inpatient psychiatric system to be at full capacity
- Ensure ICare is in place and admitting appropriate patients from hotels and shelters
- Street outreach teams
- Work with DAIL, VDH, and DMH to triage those needing other levels of care
- Managed team-based care in coordination with the CCHRT

Other AHS Housing Options

Expand AHS transitional and permanent supported housing programs

- DOC re-entry housing
- Recovery housing
- Mental Health residential beds
- Medical respite beds
- Long-term care and senior housing program beds

Housing as upstream intervention with the clients we all serve

It's Not Enough -

- When addressing unsheltered homelessness, our goal as a state and as a network of providers and advocates, is to make it **rare, brief and non-recurring**. We also talk about the three-legged stool – services, subsidies and a housing unit.
- Under current conditions, this is very difficult to achieve. We are warehousing our homelessness problem, not solving it.
- No matter how hard you try to assist someone with case management, rental subsidies, or increased spending and services, we cannot effectively help those in emergency housing move to a better place without a unit to move them to and support them in.

It's Not Enough -

- More investments in prevention, services, rental assistance, and supportive housing are ideal, but those all require a unit. We are committed to creating more community-based traditional shelters, but that can't be the only answer.
- We are making many efforts, but those efforts are undermined by a lack of units. In some ways it really is that simple. With extremely low vacancy rates and extremely high rent in Vermont, it is not a coincidence that we have among the highest rates of homelessness in the country.
- One of the most effective things we can do to alleviate the problem is to encourage the production of more housing units.

Unit Generation



DCF does not build housing units.



We are the option of last resort and are designed to be the safety net.



We do partner with other agencies, houses, community partners and others to inform their work, so that our net has fewer people to catch.



Unsheltered homelessness is complex, with many root causes, and will require all hands-on deck.