



**VERMONT**

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**AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES**

**DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

**Dr. Harry Chen, Interim Commissioner**

**2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**



**Our Vision:** Vermont is a place where people prosper; children and families are safe and have strong, loving connections; and individuals have the opportunity to fully develop their potential.

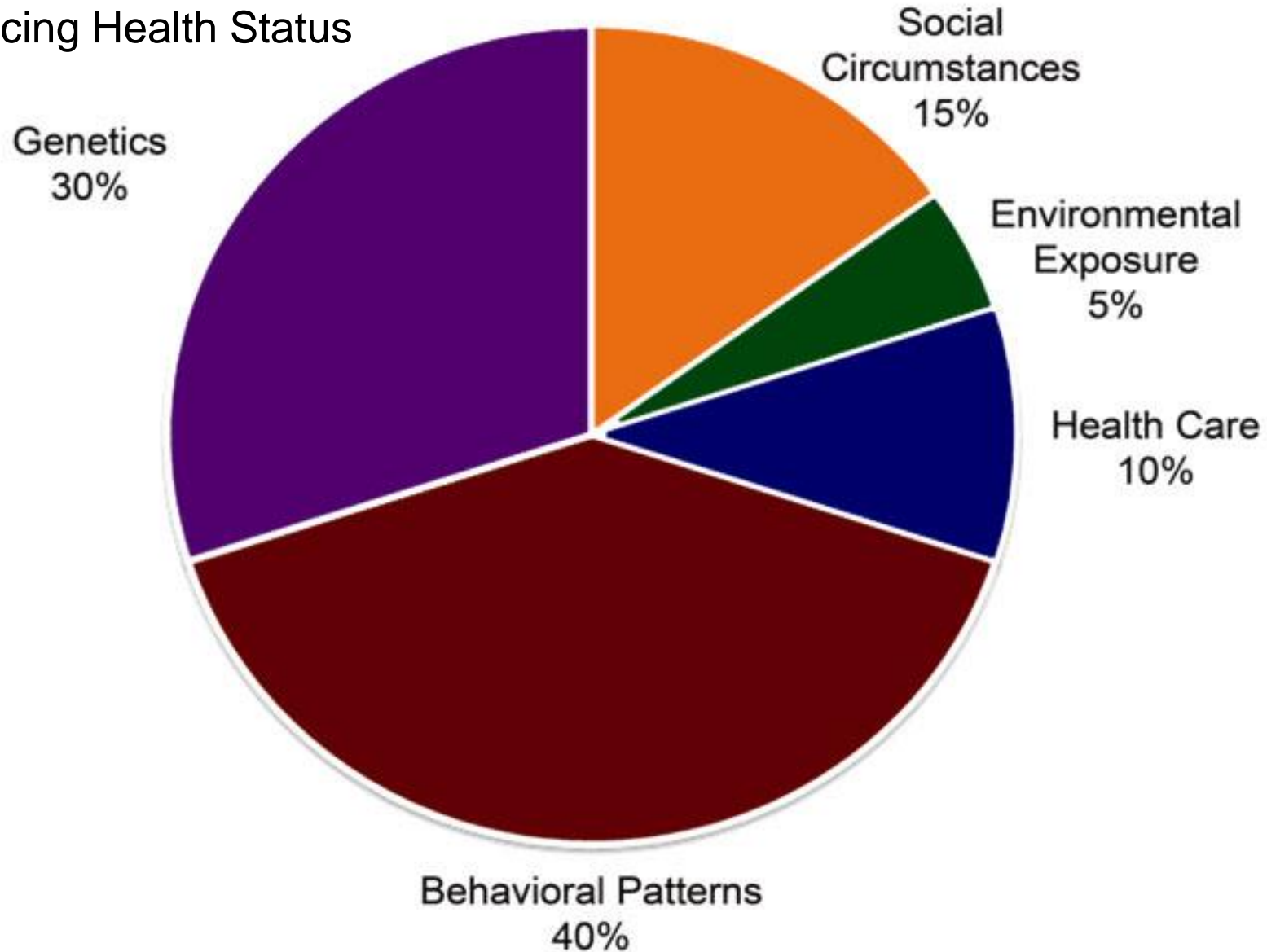
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**Our Mission** is to foster the healthy development, safety, well-being, and self-sufficiency of Vermonters.

# Determinants of Health

Factors influencing Health Status



# Social Determinants of Health



- Safe housing, transportation, and neighborhoods
- Racism, discrimination, and violence
- Education, job opportunities, and income
- Access to nutritious foods and physical activity opportunities
- Polluted air and water
- Language and literacy skills

# Department for Children and Families

1,000+ Employees across 6 Divisions and Offices

Serving 200,000 Vermonters

Family  
Services  
Division  
(FSD)

Child  
Development  
Division  
(CDD)

Office of Child  
Support  
(OCS)

Economic  
Services  
Division  
(ESD)

Office of  
Economic  
Opportunity  
(OEO)

Disability  
Determination  
Services  
(DDS)

# Family Services Division (FSD)

## *Child Welfare & Juvenile Justice*

FSD's primary focus as a Division is child safety and law abidance for youth and emerging adults. We engage with, and work alongside family, foster parents, partner agencies and the community to achieve the best outcomes that we can for the children and youth in our care and custody.

Aryka Radke, JD, Deputy Commissioner

## ***FSD MISSION***

**We engage families, foster and kin caregivers, partner agencies, and the community to increase safety and law abidance for Vermont's children and youth.**

We achieve our mission by working with families to:

- *Keep children and youth safe,*
- *Keep youth free from harmful behaviors,*

*And if that is not possible:*

- *Caring for children and youth in DCF or conditional custody and attending to their well-being, while working towards safe reunification.*

*And if that is not possible:*

- *Achieving other forms of permanency for children and youth in DCF or conditional custody by providing them with safe, supportive, lifelong connections.*

# Four Key Outcomes

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## **Safety**

**Permanence:** timely, safe

- Return home
- Adoption
- Guardianship

## **Well-being**

- Measured by health, mental health, and school success.

## **Law abidance**

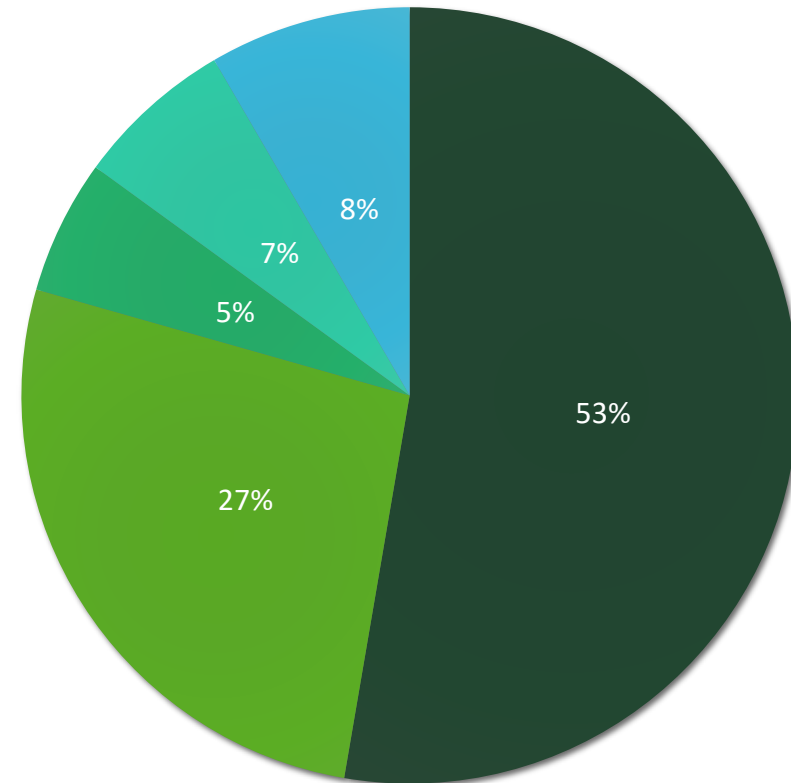
- Youth are free from unlawful behavior

# Permanency

From 10/1/21- 9/30/22

621 exits from custody

## Custody Exits



- Reunified with a parent
- Adopted
- Guardianship with relative or fictive kin
- Discharged to a relative
- Other exits



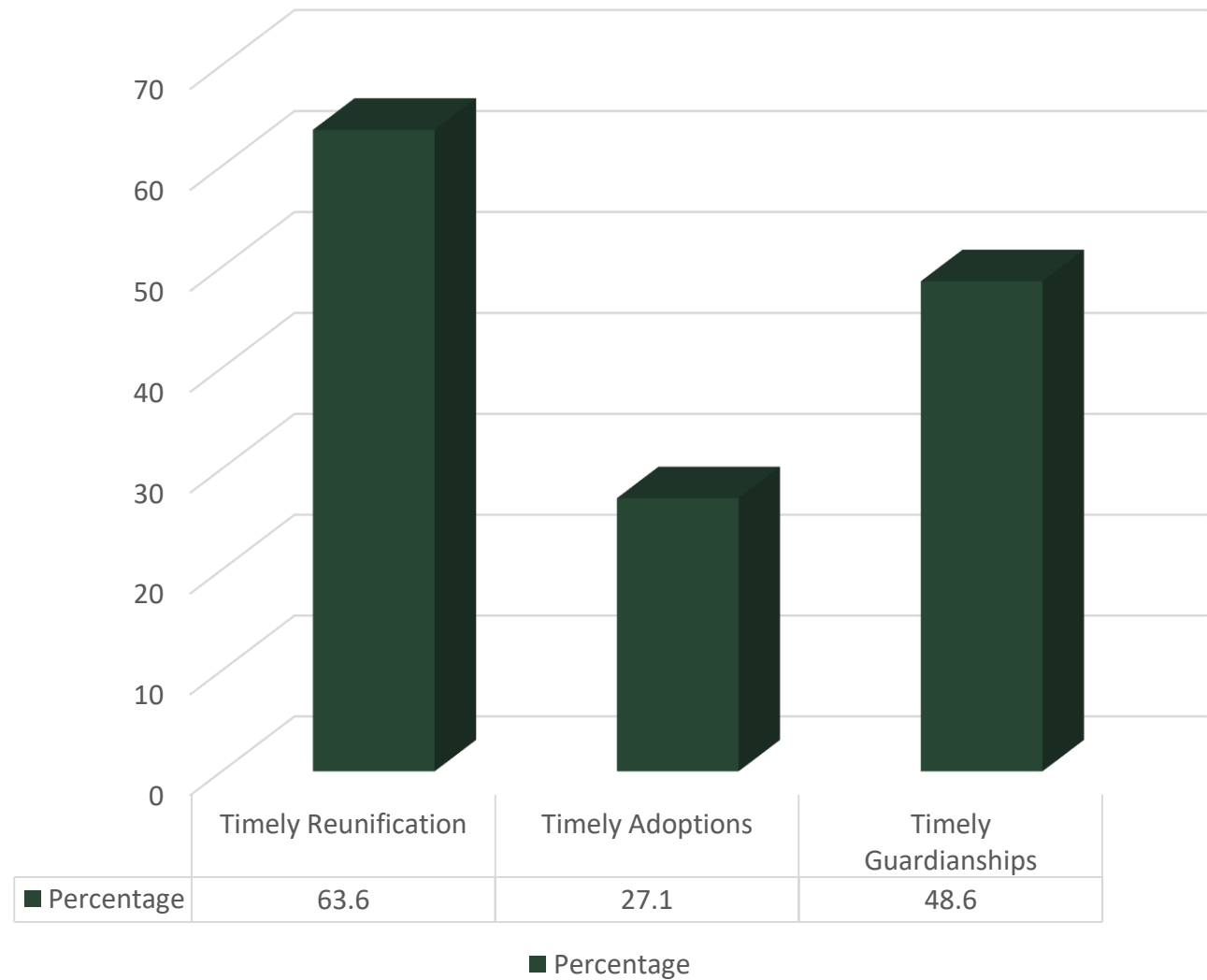
# Timely Permanence

Timely Reunification – reunified within 12 months

Timely Adoptions – adopted within 24 months

Timely Guardianship – occurred within 18 months

PUR – 10/1/21- 9/30/22

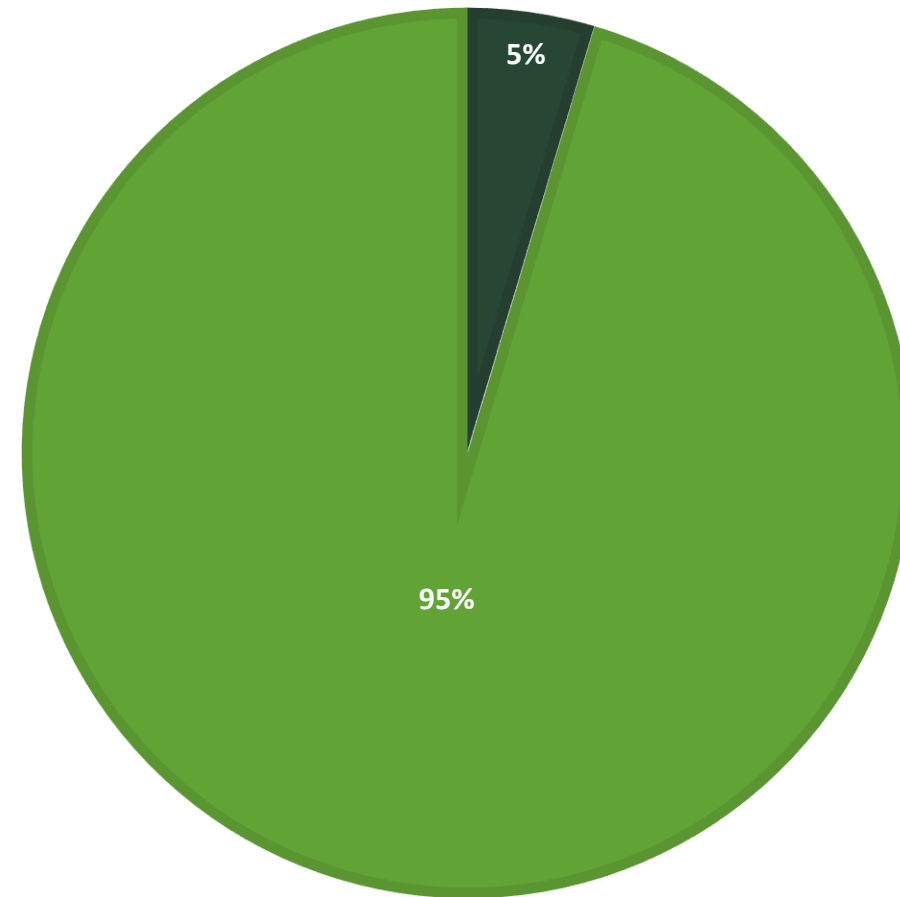


# Law Abidance

- Of the 566 custody cases that opened between 10/1/21 – 9/30/22 only 23 were Delinquents

## CUSTODY ENTRANTS

■ Delinquents ■ Other



# FSD Structure

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## District Offices

- 12 throughout state
- 180 Family Services Workers plus other staff

## State-wide Direct Service Units

- Centralized Intake: Child Protection Hotline and after-hours emergency response
- Residential Licensing and Special Investigations Unit

## Central Office

- Provides support to district offices, oversees policy and practice, manages budgets, grants and contracts, and maintains communication with federal partners

# Child Development Division (CDD)

Works with partners to provide Vermonters with affordable access to high-quality child care and child development services.

Miranda Gray, Deputy  
Commissioner

## Programs & Services

- Child Care Licensing
- Child Care Financial Assistance Program (subsidy)
- Early Childhood and Afterschool Program Quality and Workforce supports
- Children's Integrated Services
- Head Start Collaboration Office
- Universal Prekindergarten Oversight

## Who We Serve

- **1,079** Child Care, Preschool, and Afterschool Programs
- **47** Approved Relative Child Care Providers
- **7800+** Early childhood and afterschool professionals
- **4,000 – 6,000+** Families receiving Child Care Financial Assistance
- **5,000 – 6,000** families served yearly through Children's Integrated Services

# Projects and Programs

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QRIS - STARS

CDDIS

Capacity Building

Child Care  
Business Technical  
Assistance

Quality Coaching &  
Support Services

Child Care  
Licensing  
Regulation  
Revision

PROGRAMS RUN	SPENT/PROJECTED
Child Care Business Stabilization Funding	\$ 8,559,102
Essential Person Child Care & Incentive	\$ 5,748,548
Restart Stipends	\$ 6,608,605
Hazard Pay (Through DFR)	\$ 754,000
Organizational Relief Grant Program	\$ 11,802,373
Hubs and CCFAP Tuition	\$ 3,328,583
Child Care Workforce Stabilization	\$ 3,977,408
CRRSA	\$ 12,228,305
ARPA Child Care Stabilization	\$ 29,332,561
ARPA Discretionary Funds	\$ 18,839,732
Child Care Workforce Retention Bonuses	\$ 7,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 108,179,217</b>

# CDD's Response To COVID-19

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# Office of Child Support (OCS)

Responsible for establishing parentage, and establishing, collecting, enforcing, and modifying child support and medical support orders for children who do not live with one or both parents.

Lisa Rivers, Director

## Our Mission

The Vermont Office of Child Support promotes the well-being of all families by strengthening their financial safety net. We provide quality services and information to parents, caregivers, and community partners involved in the child support process.

Studies show that receipt of child support

- Increases economic independence of parents
- Reduces child poverty
- Reduces reliance on public assistance benefits
- Encourages parents to exit and remain off public assistance
- Increases parental involvement of paying parents

# OCS Programs

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OCS is a state program that is 66% federally funded.

In Fiscal Year 2021, VT OCS collected and disbursed more than \$45 million dollars in child support through income withholding, direct payments, administrative collections from tax and lottery offsets as well as property and bank liens.

Statewide presence with 109 full-time employees

- Five regional offices, delivering front-line services with an emphasis on helping parents/guardians navigate the court system; and Central Office staff that include the Customer Service Unit, Intercept Unit, Central Registry, Intergovernmental Unit, Locate Unit, and Cash Receipts Unit

For more information about OCS: visit <https://dcf.vermont.gov/ocs>



# Who We Serve and Our Partners

## WHO WE SERVE

Parents who pay child support;  
parents who receive child support;  
Guardians who are caring for children  
of others.

Over 15,000 cases benefiting more  
than 16,000 children.

## OUR PARTNERS

Economic Services

Family Services

Department of  
Corrections

Vermont Judiciary

Employers

Department of  
Labor

HireAbility Vermont

Vermont  
Association of  
Business, Industry  
and Rehabilitation

VT Network against  
Domestic and  
Sexual Violence

# Economic Services Division(ESD)

Provides economic benefits to Vermonters in need. Provides a safety net for individuals and families who may be experiencing unemployment, underemployment, single parenthood, aging, disability, the death of a family member or other life-changing events.

Andy Lange, Economic Benefits Director

Nicole Tousignant, Economic Benefits Director

Approximately 350 staff located across the state

- 12 district offices, co-located with other AHS district offices

ADO—St Albans

LDO—Brattleboro

SDO—Springfield

BDO—Burlington

MDO—Barre

TDO—Bennington

HDO—Hartford

NDO—Newport

VDO—Morrisville

JDO—St.

RDO--Rutland

YDO--Middlebury

Johnsbury

- Program eligibility staff and Reach-up case managers located at district offices

## Central Office

- Includes operations, program teams, training, administrative services, quality control, fraud, process and performance, business application support unit

## ESD Benefits Service Center (BSC) Call Center

## Application & Document Processing Center (ADPC)

# ESD Programs

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## 3SquaresVT (SNAP)

- Helps eligible Vermonters to stretch their food budgets and put three healthy meals on their tables every day. Program also provides support with employment and training, farm to table, and nutrition education.

## General and Emergency Assistance (GA/EA)

- Helps eligible individuals and families meet their emergency and basic needs. This includes: personal needs, room and board, fuel, utilities, medical, dental, prescriptions, medical supplies, burial costs, and housing. The Vermont Rental Assistance Program is a part of GA and provides a short-term rent subsidy.

## Fuel Assistance (LIHEAP)

- Helps eligible Vermonters heat their homes by paying part of their home heating bills. Crisis heating assistance, water and wastewater assistance, and a utility discount assistance are also available.

## Reach Up (TANF)

- Helps stabilize families experiencing deep poverty by providing case management, financial assistance, and support services. Childcare assistance, employment services, and post secondary education is also provided.

# Pandemic Related Programs

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## Transitional Housing Program

- Provides homeless Vermonters with a hotel room for up to 18 months. As of 11/1, approximately 1500 households are housed under this program.

## Pandemic EBT

- Provides a cash benefit for school-aged children who do not receive school lunch due to COVID related absences. \$81m has been distributed to Vermont households under this program

## Maximum Allotment

- Provides an increase 3SQ benefit to bring households up to the maximum benefit level for their household size. Approximately \$6.5m in supplemental benefits each month.

## Reach Up Emergency Rental Assistance

- Covers a household's monthly rent for up to 18 months. Approximately \$17m in rental benefits have been provided to date.

# Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO)

Partners with community organizations, private sector, government agencies and others on solutions to solve poverty

Sarah Phillips, Director

- Administers grant programs – frequently core funding for organizations
- Provides training and technical assistance
- Identifies and develops resources for communities
- Focus on results and performance accountability
- Promotes approaches informed by evidence and research to improve policy and practice

# Main Program Areas

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## **Community Action Agencies**

(Core Funding)

### **Homeless Assistance**

- Emergency Shelter and Services
- Homelessness Prevention
- Rapid Re-housing
- Coordinated Entry
- Family Supportive Housing

## **Weatherization Plus**

- Home Weatherization, incl Multi-Family
- Plus: Heat Pumps, Efficient Stoves, Home Repair, Asbestos Remediation
- Emergency Heating System Repair & Replacement

## **Financial Empowerment**

- Micro Business Development Program
- Financial Coaching

# OEO by the Numbers

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**13 staff** administer

More than **\$45m in funding** to Vermont organizations

From **14 federal and other funding sources**

To support more than **60+ community partners**

who reach more than **80,000 low income Vermonters annually**

Reports: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/o eo/resources/reports>

# OEO COVID Response & Recovery

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- ❑ Continue to coordinate with the Health Department COVID prevention, mitigation and response efforts for people experiencing homelessness
- ❑ Homeless Health Care Capacity Building Project – a partnership with VDH Health Equity Team to improve prevention and health access for people experiencing homelessness
- ❑ Housing Stability Services grant program to expand housing services for ERAP-eligible households
  - ❑ Expanded housing support services were previously supported by CRF funding and then FEMA non-congregate shelter reimbursement (ended)
- ❑ CARES Housing Voucher Program rehoused 262 households from homelessness to housing (ended) – Replicating with the HOME Family Voucher Project
- ❑ Rapid Resolution Housing Initiative – new flexible financial assistance to help households exit homelessness quickly to safe housing – Now a part of the Housing Opportunity Grant Program
- ❑ EMBRACE Microbusiness grants provided \$5k to self-employed Vermonters (ended)
- ❑ State Housing Recovery Working Group – Consult with VHCB on capital investments in homeless housing and shelter projects
- ❑ \$50m in ARPA investments to expand low-income Weatherization
- ❑ \$5m to launch the first statewide Landlord Relief Program to be administered by the Vermont State Housing Authority



# Office of Disability Determination Services (DDS)

Provides applicants with medical eligibility decisions as quickly as possible, as governed by Social Security federal statutes, regulations, and policy.

Jack McCormack, Director

**Mission:** To provide all applicants with determinations that are accurate, promptly completed, and with full, fair, and compassionate consideration of each applicant's situation and respect and concern for the individual's well-being and legal rights.

DDS is regularly a national leader in accuracy, timeliness, and public service. It regularly meets its workload & service goals within federal budget limits.

# DDS Location and Staffing

One State Office in Waterbury staffed with

- ❖ Disability Adjudicators
- ❖ Medical Consultants
- ❖ Disability (Technical) Specialists
- ❖ Other Supporting Staff

# DDS Determinations

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DDS employees work for a federal program

- SSA rules govern the work
- SSA funds all DDS operations, salaries and benefits, case costs, and indirect costs
- SSA controls DDS budget, workload volume, and staffing
- SSA closely monitors DDS performance against national standards

In Federal Fiscal Year 2022, DDS exceeded all workload targets

- Determinations on 6,815 Social Security disability claims and over 200 Medicaid disability claims
- Processed claims in an average of over 84 days – the fastest in the nation
- Case decisional accuracy of 98.6%, ranking DDS among the top five offices in the nation