

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
GENERAL ASSISTANCE TEMPORARY HOUSING PROGRAM
28 JANUARY 2014**

1. How much of the appropriation that was passed in Act 50, the budget for General Assistance has been spent to date?

- A. Regarding the total General Assistance program budget, between July 1 and December 31, 2013 DCF paid out **\$5,196,146**.
- B. As of December 31, 2013, DCF paid out **\$1,475,169** for General Assistance temporary housing.

These figures do not reflect most expenses for the month of December as invoices tend to lag about a month after the expense was incurred. It is safe to say as of January 15, 2014, the \$1.5M GA housing budget is overspent.

2. How many of the people who receive motel vouchers have no financial resources to contribute towards the required 50% of available income?

DCF conducted a manual, randomly selected review of 100 Burlington District Office files of GA housing grantees for the five month period August through December 2013. The research revealed the following:

Of the 100 cases:

- 64% had income
- 36% had no income

Of the 64% that had income:

- Reach Up (or RU with other income) – 28% (18)
- SSI, SSA or combination – 46% (29)
- Job Income – 11% (7)
- Unemployment – 6% (4)
- General Assistance – 9% (6)

3. After a person has exhausted their 28 days in a motel how long is it until they can come back and ask for more motel stays?

One year - An applicant is eligible under the vulnerable population rules for 28 days of housing within a twelve-month period. Cold weather exception is the only reason within that one year time frame families can get additional emergency housing under GA.

4. What would happen if the full BAA request of \$3.2 million is not appropriated? What policy changes would have to be made?

The Department would request that the Legislature put in the BAA language new eligibility criteria to be applied for the rest of this year so that the changes could go into effect immediately. If the legislature puts this budgetary restriction in place without clear guidance to the Department about

how to meet the budget target, the Department would immediately engage stakeholders to get their best thinking about how to restrict the program for the remainder of the fiscal year.

5. *What would happen if the legislature said “No more motel vouchers for other than catastrophic situations?”*

From August 1 to December 31, 2013, DCF granted 3,611 temporary housing applications. Of that total, 1,008, or 28% of the total grants made, were for catastrophic circumstances. In other words, 72% (or 2,603) of the households granted temporary housing under current rules were granted “for other than catastrophic situations.”

This decision would mean many – almost three-quarters – of the households currently eligible for GA temporary housing would become ineligible. 73% (2,627 households) of all temporary housing grants have been for single person households. Only 27% of grants have gone to families with children. 1,778 children were in households that have already been denied GA housing in this fiscal year.

6. *What is the department’s experience with more permanent housing solutions? How many people have been permanently housed?*

The Department believes its investments in upstream and rapid rehousing services are paying dividends. Since inception the Vermont Rental Subsidy program has transitioned 123 low-income households, consisting of 377 persons, from homelessness to affordable housing.

The midyear 2014 Community Housing Grants report data tell us that 132 households that were at risk of homelessness have had their housing stabilized within 28 days. 172 households that were homeless have been rehoused within 28 days and 66 of those households remain stably housed at 90 days.

While it is too early to have performance and outcome data for Harbor Place (HP), where services started on Nov. 1, 2013, the Department is optimistic that GA households who are served there will be more successful (than others not receiving this service) avoiding additional experiences of homelessness. On site case management services are an important program enhancement. We will know more definitively in a few months if this service is yielding positive results.

The Department also initiated a \$400,000 Family Supported Housing demonstration project in three communities – Burlington, Rutland and Brattleboro. While services are now fully in place in those communities, it is too early to tell how significantly these intensive and comprehensive case management services for homeless families, and families at risk of homelessness, are bending the curve. This initiative was modeled after proven successful national models and the Department looks forward to sharing program performance and outcome data in the next budget season.

7. *If people are not being put up in hotels, where are they?*

If they are found ineligible for temporary housing, we do not track where they go. We make referrals to community action agencies and other community supports, such as warming shelters, churches and parent child centers.

8. What is the maximum number of days a person can access obtaining vouchers in a year's time?

Under the catastrophic criteria households can receive up to 84 days within a twelve-month period. Those determined eligible under the vulnerable population criteria can receive 28 days within a twelve-month period. The cold weather exception (CWE) overrides these eligibility criteria.

9. How much does the Department anticipate spending in 2014 due to the cold weather policy?

If the 2014 winter continues to be as cold as it has been for the past two months, the cost for housing people during cold weather nights will be approximately **\$835,000**.

Below are the CWE expenses that have been authorized for October, November and December 2013. The January through April figures are estimated based on the December experience (28 cold weather nights). These numbers include Vermont 2-1-1 as well ESD authorizations.

CWE	Oct 13	Nov 13	Dec 13	Jan 14	Feb 14	Mar 14	Apr 14	TOTAL
	\$ 1,997	\$ 50,866	\$ 152,121	\$ 152,121	\$ 152,121	\$ 152,121	\$ 76,060	\$ 737,407

In addition, DCF estimates that half of the monthly contracted cost for Harbor Place can be projected for CWE authorizations, for a total projected CWE cost of Harbor Place for FY14 of **\$97,131**.