

Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Adjustment
Testimony to House Appropriations Committee
January 21, 2015
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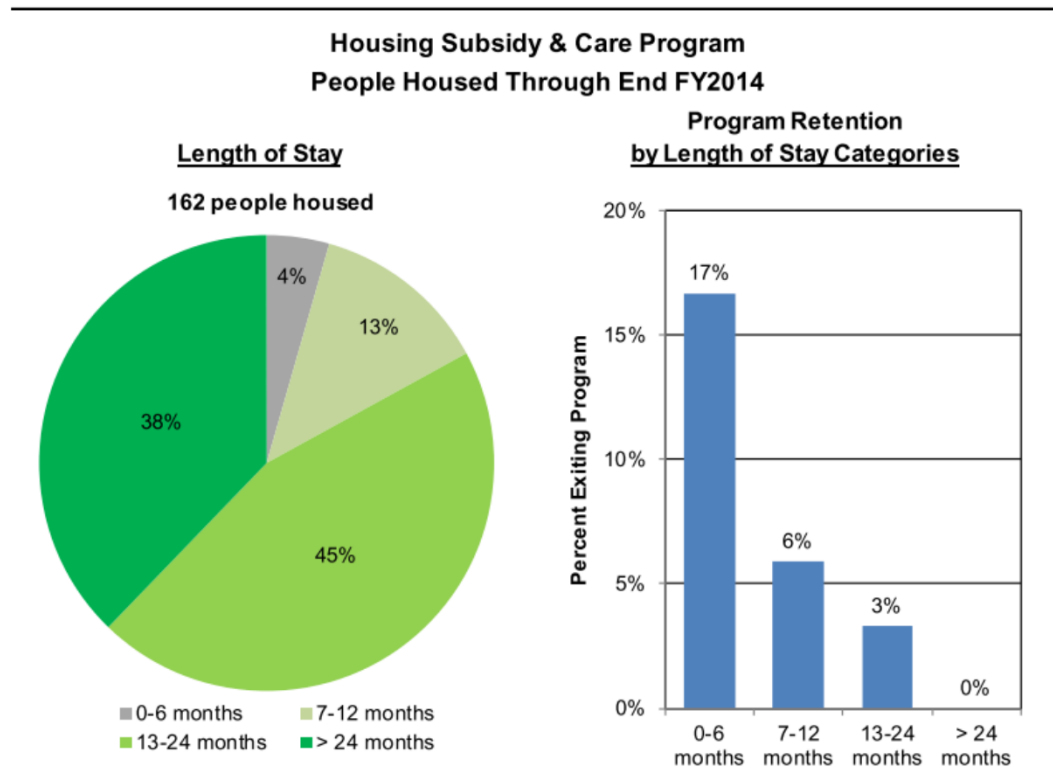
The FY15 Budget Adjustment Act includes a proposal by the Department of Mental Health to remove \$437,139 in funding for unused housing vouchers, based on the trend in recent demand for the vouchers.

The Vermont Council recommends reinstatement of this line item for the following reasons:

- Lack of access to housing is a frequent obstacle for people who are attempting to move toward recovery and independent living. Without a stable home recovery is difficult to achieve.
- Lack of access to housing is a major factor contributing to the back-up that occurs in facilities providing higher levels of care such as transitional housing, intensive residential programs and crisis beds.
- Some housing subsidies went unused in FY'15 because of exceedingly narrow eligibility criteria as defined by DMH and the Vermont Housing Authority
- The Agency of Human Services may have some discretion to modify the eligibility for some housing subsidies – this should be investigated to improve utilization.
- Designated Agencies offer an integrated array of supports such as case management, emergency services, adult outpatient programs and vocational assistance that help individuals succeed in independent living when housing subsidies become available.

From the Department of Mental Health Report to the Legislature on the Implementation of Act 79
January 2015

The performance indicator the department seeks to achieve is a one year housing retention. The lengths of stay in housing since the Housing and Subsidy Program began range from 30 to 713 days, with over 80% having lengths of stay greater than one year. An equal number of male and female were also served. Of the 135 served during the last half of 2014, more than 84% were literally homeless, meaning on the streets, in a shelter, or in a hospital. Less than 9% of those assisted were at serious risk of losing housing and going to an acute care bed. Of the 162 housed since December 2011, 41 persons have exited. Thirty three percent of those have positive outcomes.



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- All 9 self-sufficiency outcome measures recorded demonstrate improvement for the individuals
- participating in the Housing Subsidy & Care program. Most notable was the improvement in disability,
- income, housing, mental health, and community involvement. All 10 Designated Agencies and the Department's adult Specialized Service Agency are service providers for housing subsidy and care, as well as several additional providers

