

Economic Services Division Housing Programs Briefing

January 9, 2015

I. Vermont Rental Subsidy Program (VRS)

- The budget increased from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 in SFY 15
- Currently there are 103 active vouchers; 33 tentatively granted and 22 on the waiting list
- Over 60% of the active vouchers are for single parent households with children
- 75% of households are receiving either Reach Up, SSI benefits, or a combination of both
- The average monthly rent paid by each household is \$265.00
- The average monthly rent paid by ESD per each household is \$580.00
- 140 households have moved off the program since its inception
- 75% of households moved off the program because they received a Section 8 voucher, had increased earnings, or found other affordable, permanent housing
- Case management services provided by the local community housing teams to households before and after applying for vouchers has been critical to the success of this program

II. General Assistance Emergency Housing Program

a. Catastrophic and Vulnerable populations



- In the first half of SFY '15, ESD has received over 9,500 requests for emergency housing (excluding cold weather exception); over 6,100 of these were granted
- Of the 6,100 granted, approximately 4,100 were for single adults and 2,000 were for families
- Over 6,800 adults and 3,600 children have been housed under the program for a total of 21,700 nights
- The approximate cost of providing emergency housing for the catastrophic and vulnerable populations is \$1.5 million
- The average cost per night is approximately \$70.00

b. Cold Weather Exception (CWE): from July 2014 – December 2014

- Cold Weather Exception nights began in November 2014 this season
- This year we have received almost 2,900 requests for emergency housing under the cold weather exception
- Almost 3,100 adults and 550 children have been served under the cold weather exception for a total of approximately 3,800 nights
- The approximate cost of providing cold weather exception housing is \$263,000 within this time period
- The average cost per night is approximately \$69.00
- 41 nights met the cold weather exception criteria compared to the same time period last year of 55 nights

III. Harbor Place

- On November 1, 2013 Harbor Place (HP) began serving its first individuals and families
- The facility was opened under the management of Champlain Housing Trust (CHT) with significant financial investment from DCF

- These funds supported the renovation of the facility from its former use as a motel and secured access to 30 rooms at a cost of \$38.00 per room per night. This guarantees ESD a minimum number of beds in Chittenden County at a 40% savings compared to motels.
- In addition to the 30 contracted rooms, Harbor Place has 20 additional rooms potentially available to ESD for use in the Emergency Housing Program
- Community partners, including Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO), Women Helping Battered Women (WHBW) and Safe Harbor Health Center have committed case management and other resources to help residents identify and address underlying needs and barriers in securing housing. There are bi-weekly check-in calls with community partners, 2-1-1, CHT, Harbor Place and ESD.
- CHT and the participating community partners have worked together to make Harbor Place a successful program.

IV. Challenges

- Even though we have had 14 fewer cold weather exception nights so far this season, we are ahead of last year in the number of requests received, adults and children served, and the number of motel nights provided
- We are seeing an increase in the number of adults and families seeking emergency housing due to domestic violence
- We are also seeing an increase in the number of adults and families who are chronically homeless and no longer able to stay with family or friends
- We continue to see chronic alcohol and substance use among adults seeking emergency housing
- We continue to see many individuals seeking VRS vouchers that have mental health issues which affect their ability to acquire and maintain permanent housing

V. New Initiatives

- ESD is working with CVOEO to establish a warming shelter this winter season at the former Ethan Allen Club in Burlington. This will potentially provide 20 beds to use as an alternative to motels on CWE nights.

- ESD is working with Safe Harbor, the Health Center and Champlain Housing Trust to establish a warming shelter next season in Burlington. This will potentially provide 52 beds to use as an alternative to motels on CWE nights.
- The plan is to utilize the warming shelters for single adults and use Harbor Place for families. This model will allow more access to case management and support services to individuals and families, which has shown to be critical in moving individuals and families into more stable and permanent housing.