

Accelerating Vermont's Effort to End Homelessness

Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition

Background

The State of Vermont is facing a rugged and persistent problem of homelessness. The causes are many. Rising rents, low vacancy rates, flat wages, a shortage of affordable units and social dynamics including addiction and mental health issues are leaving an increasing number of Vermonters without housing. Governor Shumlin has called for an end to family homelessness by 2020. With the support of the Legislature, the Administration and state and local housing and service organizations are employing many effective strategies. Through these efforts, it has become clear that in addition to an affordable apartment, many homeless families and individuals also need services and rent subsidies to be successful in their new homes. While each of these is available to some degree, they are not sufficient and Vermont needs a more systemic approach.

The Agency of Human Services, with support from the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, the Vermont Housing Finance Agency and the NeighborWorks Alliance of Vermont, is engaging a national technical assistance provider to build local capacity and increase coordination between housing and service providers on housing the homeless. This is the first of two necessary elements for ending family and all homelessness. Additional funding is needed for the second.

Proposal

To develop a comprehensive understanding of the problem, a systems approach to solutions, and a roadmap for success for ending family and all homelessness. The roadmap will include action steps, implementation strategies and cost analysis, including an analysis of existing State expenditures related to homelessness and potential avoided costs in health care, corrections, etc. resulting from creating more permanent supportive housing and reducing homelessness. The roadmap will be developed through a public engagement process drawing on the expertise of state and local stakeholders. The process will be guided by a technical assistance provider experienced in supportive housing and successful models created by other jurisdictions. Total cost is estimated at \$80,000 with some funding to be provided by partner agencies. Our request is for \$40,000 to cover 50% of the cost, to be matched by the partner agencies.

Summary

Many in Vermont are working tirelessly to help the homeless and these efforts are taking many forms - policy discussions, pilot programs at AHS, local efforts to site warming shelters, new transitional housing models and individuals making meals. The project outlined briefly above is needed to complement existing efforts if we are truly to end family and all homelessness for Vermonters.