

# Economic Services Division (ESD) Department for Children and Families Agency of Human Services



## General Assistance Program Overview

January 28, 2016

Sean Brown  
Deputy Commissioner  
Economic Services Division



**General Assistance (GA) is an emergency financial assistance program for individuals needing help with basic needs.**

Assistance may include:

- Emergency housing
- Personal needs income
- Rental subsidy
- Medical, Dental, or Prescriptions
- Burials

# Basic Emergency Housing Eligibility Criteria

In order to receive benefits, clients must be found eligible under one of three categories:

- 1) Vulnerable, for a benefit up to 28 days within a 12 month period
- 2) Catastrophic, for a benefit up to 84 days within a 12 month period
- 3) Cold Weather Exception (CWE)

# Vulnerable Eligibility

Must meet one of the following criteria:

1. A family with a child under the age of 6
2. Individual in receipt of SSI or SSDI benefits
3. A woman in her third trimester of pregnancy
4. Is age 65 or older

# Catastrophic Eligibility

Housing criteria when an applicant is homeless because of:

- Natural disaster
- Constructive eviction due to landlord's failure to provide a habitable unit
- Court ordered eviction over which the applicant had no control
- Death of spouse or minor child
- Domestic violence

# Cold Weather Exception (CWE)

Eligibility for temporary housing will be relaxed in a district when any of the following conditions exist, or are anticipated to exist, within the hours of 6 p.m. – 6 a.m.

1. Temperatures or Wind Chill are less than 20 degrees (F); or
2. Temperatures are less than 32 degrees (F) with a higher than 50% chance of precipitation reported.

# CWE Analysis for SFY14 & SFY15

## COLD WEATHER EXCEPTION ANALYSIS FOR SFY14 & SFY15

<u>CWE Measure</u>	<u>SFY14</u>	<u>SFY15</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Nights Meeting Criteria*	154	133	-21	-14%
Requests for Emergency Housing	6835	12,279	5444	80%
Number of Motel Nights	16,542	26,226	9684	56%
Avg. Number Motel Rooms Per CWE Night	107	197	90	84%
Number of Adults	7338	13152	5814	80%
Number of Children	1558	3370	1812	116%
Projected Cost	\$ 983,443.00	\$1,833,587.00	\$ 850,144.00	86%

\*The first CWE night in SFY14 was 10/25/2013 and in SFY15 was 11/2/2014.

\*The last CWE night in SFY14 was 4/25/14 and in SFY15 was 4/8/15.

## Eligibility for Medical/Dental Services

Experienced an emergency need and no available resources and;

- Is without prescriptions and did not lose health insurance due to non-compliance
- Has an emergency dental when the applicant has pain, infection, or bleeding
- Needs durable medical equipment when screened and deemed eligible by DVHA



# Personal Needs Income (PNI)

- PNI benefits are meant to assist with basic life essentials.
- To be eligible you must pass an income test, be unable to work due to medical or other employment barriers, or be age 65 or older.
- The program can pay up to \$232.00 for rent inside Chittenden County, up to \$198.00 for rent outside of Chittenden County which is paid directly to the landlord.
- In addition to rental assistance, it can pay current utility/fuel bills along with Personal Need Income (PNI) which averages \$2.00 per day in cash assistance issued to an EBT card.

# GA Burials

The application for burial assistance is completed by the funeral home that made/is making the burial arrangements for the deceased.

- The maximum payment is **\$1,100.00** and has been established by DCF to cover the basic final disposition of human remains.
- If available resources of the deceased and the surviving spouse equal or exceed the maximum payment (\$1,100.00), the department will not pay any burial expenses.
- Eligibility criteria: The deceased must be a Vermont resident or has died in Vermont and no funds/resources available to them at the time of their death that would allow their spouse and/or family to pay for the burial expenses.

# GA Burial Data

Month	Year	#granted	\$ spent
July	2014	52	\$56,044.00
August	2014	36	\$37,832.00
September	2014	36	\$37,802.00
October	2014	41	\$44,935.00
November	2014	33	\$33,346.00
December	2014	37	\$38,126.00
January	2015	45	\$48,234.00
February	2015	38	\$39,006.00
March	2015	51	\$52,370.00
April	2015	36	\$36,601.00
May	2015	37	\$38,908.00
June	2015	40	\$42,106.00
	Total	482	\$505,310.00
	Average	40.17	\$42,109.17

# Vermont Rental Subsidy

- The VRSP provides tenant-based rental assistance patterned after the federal Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.
- The program has a designated priority with the VT State Housing Authority Section 8 program.
- Is designed to function as a bridge to federal rental assistance.
- To be eligible, a household must be homeless and receiving Reach-Up or SSI, or be under 125% of Federal poverty level.

# Vermont Rental Subsidy Data (Year to Year Comparison)

	September 2013	September 2014	September 2015
Total Households approved and leased up	61	79	118
Total Households tentatively granted and seeking housing	1	61	30
Average monthly rent paid by tenant	\$295	\$268	\$308
Average monthly rent paid by DCF	\$662	\$553	\$626
Projected average cost per household for full year of VRS subsidy	\$7944	\$6636	\$7512
Average time housed by VRS	10	12	10

# Application Procedures

During regular business hours, 7:45am – 4:30pm, Monday through Friday, individuals must apply in person at a District Office.

After hours, individuals contact Vermont 2-1-1 but must appear in person at a District Office on the following day business day.

# VT 2-1-1 Background

ESD contracted with Vermont 2-1-1 in June 2010, to handle after hours emergency calls in order to make service more efficient and consistent.

July – December 2015

	Authorized	Alternate Shelter Available	Ineligible (per rules)	Total requests	Other ESD After Hours calls	Total After Hours Calls
July	53	7	83	143	115	258
August	73	4	79	156	99	255
September	75	6	73	154	136	290
October	90	9	100	199	295	494
November	118	26	101	245	195	440
December	125	39	78	242	200	442
Totals	582	98	567	1247	1001	2348

# VT 2-1-1 After Hours Housing Requests and Determinations for December 2015

District	Housing Authorized	Alternate Shelter	Ineligible	Total Requests
St. Albans	4	0	3	7
Burlington	42	15	31	88
Hartford	2	3	3	8
<u>St. Johnsbury</u>	4	1	2	7
Brattleboro	13	3	1	17
Barre	18	2	11	31
Newport	0	1	0	1
Rutland	17	6	11	34
Springfield	3	1	2	6
Bennington	17	5	10	32
Morrisville	5	1	3	9
Middlebury	0	1	1	2