

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



General Assistance Program Overview

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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