

**FAMILY SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROGRAM:  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
INTERIM REPORT  
JULY 1 - DECEMBER 31, 2014**

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Submitted to:  
Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity  
Department for Children and Families  
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Executive Summary

### ABSTRACT

The Vermont State Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) administers the Family Supportive Housing (FSH) program to reduce the incidence and duration of homelessness. This report covers the first 6 months of state fiscal year ending June 30, 2015.

The FSH program expanded grantees from three Agency of Human Services (AHS) districts that enrolled 48 families in the previous year that ended June 30, 2014 to five AHS districts that enrolled 78 families. There are 150 children and 102 adults receiving services among the 78 families. Among the 78 families enrolled this year, 62 families that were placed in permanent housing with 119 children and 77 adults. There were 16 families enrolled with 31 children and 25 adults that had not been placed in permanent housing as of December 31, 2015.

### BACKGROUND - GRANTEES, PARTNERS AND PARTICIPANTS

The Family Supportive Housing (FSH) program aims to reduce child and family homelessness in Vermont. The grantees and their respective Agency of Human Services' (AHS) districts for fiscal year ending June 30, 2015 are:

1. Winston Prouty Center (WPC) for Child Development - Brattleboro;
2. Homeless Prevention Center (HPC) - Rutland;
3. The Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS) and HowardCenter partnership - Burlington;
4. The Upper Valley Haven, Inc. (The Haven) - Hartford; and
5. Northeast Kingdom Community Action (NEKCA), St. Johnsbury.

Grantees (1-3) are in their second year of the pilot. Grantees (4-5) started their pilots, July 1, 2014. Families experiencing homelessness which include shelter and state-funded motel stay must have a parent in the household who agrees to services to be eligible. Families can receive up to 24 months of intensive case management and service coordination. Priority is given to families that meet one or more of the following criteria: the family has multiple stays in shelters or state-funded motel stays; the family has an active case with DCF Family Services; or the family has children under the age of six.

The Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) provides administrative oversight, technical assistance, facilitation of in-person meetings and training sessions. Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO), Financial Futures Program trains and provides technical assistance to the FSH grantees to assist families in achieving their financial goals. OEO contracts with Lynn Management Consulting to support the evaluation activities. These activities by design use a participatory approach to evaluate outcomes and processes.

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The grantees employ service coordinators to provide service coordination and case management to all members of the FSH household. Each service coordinator works with 12 – 15 households on average. The types of services are customized to a family’s needs.

Each grantee submits a quarterly report, which records the outcome measures and indicators for all families. Indicators for housing, tenant engagement, child safety, family stability and self-sufficiency, family health and wellness, employment and financial stability are measured at 3, 6, 12 and 24 month post-enrollment intervals. This section of the report aggregates this data for the period of September 1 – December 31, 2014.

The FSH grantees as a whole worked with 78 families, within the expected range of 75 to 90 families. There were 79% (62/78) of the families placed in permanent housing (year-to-date) with 165 days as the median number of days a family was homeless.

The potential service needs for the 78 families comprised of 150 children and 102 adults were based on the following:

- 67% (52/78) of families are enrolled in Reach Up.
- 26% (20/78) of families have an open case with Family Services. This is one of the three prioritization criteria for enrollment into FSH.
- 23 % (23/102) of adults entered FSH in recovery of substance use.
- 25% (25/102) reported active substance use at intake. This had not been previously tracked.
- 64% (65/102) of adults entered FSH unemployed.
- 33 % (34/102) of adults entered employed.

The percentage and number of families enrolled in on Reach Up was 85% (41/48) last year (FSH Annual Executive Report, June 30, 2014, p.2). Five families graduated Reach-Up within 24 months.

## OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

Table 1 shows the total number of families reaching 3, 6 and 12 month post-enrollment intervals in the program. Please see the full report for the details for each AHS district enrollment and sustained housing information.

Table 1 Enrollment Intervals for Housed and Seeking Housing		3 Months	6 Months	12 Months
# of families <u>HOUSED</u> that have reached each post-enrollment interval (Program to Date)	#	49	36	21
# of families <u>seeking housing</u> who have reached each post enrollment interval (Program to Date)	#	<b>18</b>	<b>8</b>	*1

<sup>1</sup> There were no families not in permanent housing by 12 months.

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The indicator for active engagement is defined as families regularly participate in case management and program meetings. Among families that were housed, the results are:

- 98% (48/49) of the families were actively engaged at 3 months.
- 86% (31/36) of the families were actively engaged at 6 months.
- 90% (19/21) of the families were actively engaged at 12 months.

Families that are seeking permanent housing are measured for active engagement in regular meetings:

- 94% (17/18) families are actively engaged in regular meetings at 3 months. 1 family had not made the 3 month post-enrollment interval.
- 63% (5/8) of the families are actively engaged in regular meetings at 6 months.

## STRENGTHS – WHAT IS WORKING WELL?

- Housing Stability<sup>2</sup> - Sustaining permanent housing:
  - 88% (43/49) of families were stable at their 3 month interval.
  - 94% (34/36) of families were stable at their 6 month interval.
  - 95% (20/21) of families at 12 months.
- Tenant Responsibility – Current with Rent:
  - 92% (45/49) of families at 3 months.
  - 89 % (32/36) of families at 6 months.
  - 81% (17/21) of families at 12 months.
- Tenant Responsibility- No breach of Lease:
  - 94% (46/49) of families at 3 months while 3/49 had a breach.
  - 83% (30/36) of families at 6 months.
  - 81 % (17/21) of families at 12 months.
- Family Health and Wellness – 87% (103/119) of the children enrolled and housed, are up-to-date on their well child visits.
- Employment – sustained employment for adults entering the program employed:
  - 95% (21/22) of adults remain employed at 3 months.
  - 85% (11/13) of adults remain employed at 6 months<sup>3</sup>.
- Employment – Please see Table 3 (Challenges) for attaining employment for adults entering the program unemployed.

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<sup>2</sup> Stably housed is general. For example, one family may be in the same permanent housing while another may move into a new house or apartment.

<sup>3</sup> The percentage of adults who entered employed and remained employed at their 12-month post-enrollment interval is not included since the sample size is statistically small (less than 20).

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## CHALLENGES – WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE?

The areas for improvement are:

- **Housing Stability** – 23% (18/78) of families are seeking housing. Challenges include finding affordable housing, which passes inspection and identification of subsidies that help to make the rent more affordable.
- **Financial Empowerment** – Steps have been taken by families towards each indicator.
  - At the 3-month post-enrollment interval, 11 families participated in a financial class or coaching session compared to 17 at 6 months and 10 at 12 months.
  - There were no improvements to credit score or increased savings.
  - However, 24% (5/21) of families at the 12 month post-enrollment interval reduced debt.
  - Credit history, financing and saving, reliable transportation, and employment opportunities are ongoing challenges. Families are living in “survival mode” for the first few months that detract from setting goals in this area.
  - To support increased savings for families, the Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity and FSH grantees are exploring ways to work with local banks to establish savings accounts for families once enrolled.<sup>4</sup>
- **Resolution of Open Cases** – 10% (2/20) of open cases were favorably resolved while 85% (17/20) remain open. One family lost custody of a child.
  - There were no reports of family reunification within 12 months.
  - One grantee reported one challenge was to share and coordinate service plans in a timely manner with Family Services case managers.
- **Family Health and Wellness- Child and adult indicators**
  - There are 14% (17/119) of the children in the program, are not up-to-date with their well-child visits.
  - Maintaining sobriety at the post-enrollment intervals dropped at 6 months (see Table 2) but then rebounded by the 12 month post-enrollment interval.

Table 2 Sobriety Over Time		3 Months	6 Months	12 Months
of those in recovery, the # who have reached 3, 6 and 12 months interval	#	22	17	8
#/% of those in recovery who maintained their sobriety at 3, 6, 9, 12 and 24 months	#	15	10	6
	%	68%	59%	75%

- **Employment** – Table 3 shows the number of adults who entered the program unemployed and found employment at the 3, 6 and 12 months.

<sup>4</sup> The family’s contribution is matched by the program and would be automatic. Families will have to actively opt out of creating a savings otherwise.

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- Challenges include a lack of public transportation and reliable transportation.
- According to one grantee, FSH participants may not be eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation or Vermont Adult Learning services but would benefit from an employment specialist

Table 3 EMPLOYMENT	3 Months	6 Months	12 Months
# of adults enrolled and who entered program unemployed	65 (includes adults enrolled less than 3 months)		
of those who entered unemployed, # who have reached 3,6,12 and 24 months	37	27	17
# of those adults who secured employment during these time intervals	11	5	8
% who secured employment	17%	8%	12%

## IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?

Families engaged in the FSH program show consistent progress among the housing stability, tenant responsibility and engagement indicators. The children’s health indicator (up-to-date on well-child visits) and adults in recovery (maintaining sobriety) show progress. Employed adults are able to sustain their employment while in FSH. There are examples of how participants have taken steps to improve financial empowerment, like attending a class. Five of the 19 households that were housed reached the 12 months interval and have reduced debt. Here’s what one participant said about the program:

*The FSH program has been the most empowering program I have experienced. Everyone has worked together to ensure my success on all levels. Compared to the frustrations associated with wait lists for housing while being homeless with a child and struggling to be self-sufficient on all levels, FSH has provided me more than that. They gave me peace of mind with helping to transit from homelessness to having my apartment. I’m forever grateful and honestly, words could never express the gratitude I have for this program.*

The areas to improve include employment stability for adults that enter the program unemployed. 17% are employed at 3 months; 8% at 6 months; and 12 % at 12 months. The other area is financial stability. There were no families with an improved credit score and increased savings. The Office of Economic Opportunity OEO and grantees are looking at other indicators to track progress of the small steps towards savings and debt reduction. The child safety indicator had 2 of the 22 open cases resolved. Along with maintaining sobriety, participants who are actively using substances (14/102 adults) may agree to treatment services in the future.

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Grantees included examples of effective collaboration with local partners in their 6 month narrative reports. Specific examples included:

- There were new partnerships with private property owners.
- Grantees continued to collaborate with local housing providers to address the complex situations of families enrolled in the program.
- One pilot worked with the property owners, school and other partners to secure transportation for children as they transitioned from one school district to another as the family waited for an apartment to open in the school district.

Please refer to full report for additional analysis of service coordination and the collaboration process: Connection with Reach Up and Family Services staff.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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