

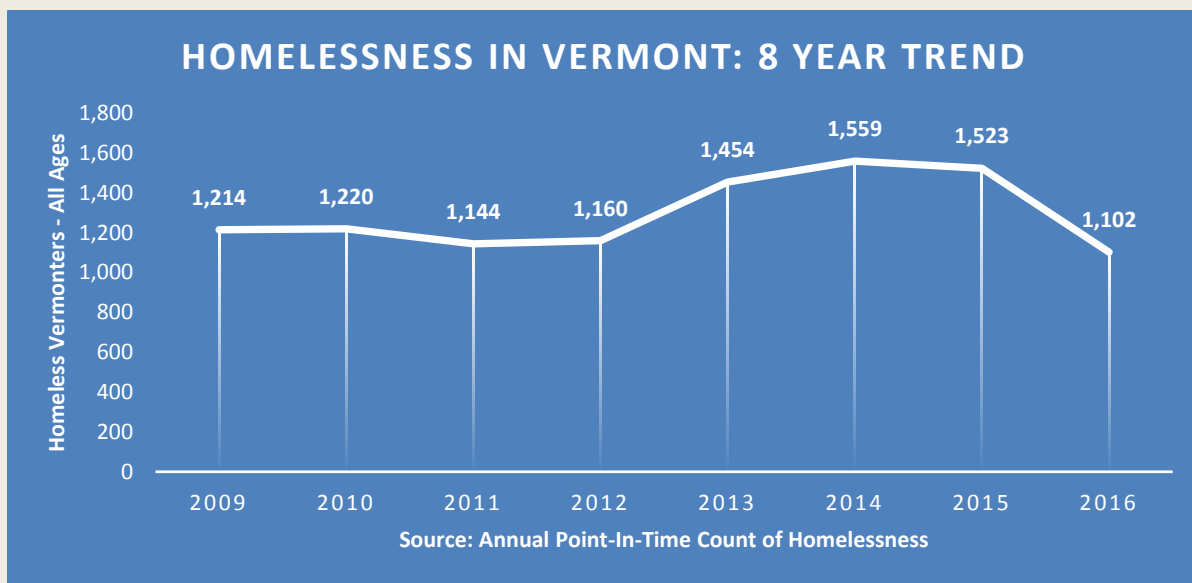
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Family Homelessness and the Roadmap Study

Good Morning. My name is Angus Chaney. I'm the Housing Director for Vermont's Agency of Human Services and chair the Governor's Council on Homelessness. I'll be re-capping some of the progress in Vermont during the past year. My colleague, Jennifer Hollar, with the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, will then bring us up to date with an outline of our work to develop a *Roadmap to End Homelessness*.

Vermont Data: Significant Reductions in Homelessness between 2015 and 2016

When I testified before this committee in July 2015, AHS had recently launched a statewide initiative to end Child and Family Homelessness by 2020. At that time, 1,523 Vermonters were homeless and roughly a quarter were children under 18. Since then, Vermont has witnessed – and welcomed - significant reductions in homelessness across all regions and demographic groups.



The most recent data indicate that in one year, the number of Vermonters without housing decreased to 1,102, with the number of homeless children under 18 similarly decreasing from 356 to 257. (A 28% reduction in both age groups.) During this same year, the number of homeless families with children decreased from 199 to 156 (a 22% reduction). This stands in sharp contrast to other regions of the United States which have recently witnessed sharp upticks in homelessness, or states that are having great success reducing homelessness among one demographic group at the expense of others. While we are barely a quarter of the way to achieving our goal in Vermont, it's important to understand what's working here to reduce homelessness so we can refine it and bring it to scale.

What's Working?

Key to reducing homelessness among any population is a three-part remedy of **rental subsidy, supportive services and access to rental housing**. At the local level, families and children who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness need access to a continuum of options. These resources must be coordinated and matched appropriately to a family's needs. Many families need only short-term financial assistance to navigate an economic crisis and avoid homelessness, while some that have experienced multiple episodes of homelessness and face multiple risk factors may require longer term case management supports with ongoing rental subsidy to be successful in housing.

Coordinating these critical resources at the state level is ensured by strong partnerships between funders of subsidies, services and developers, such as AHS, DHCD, VHCB, VHFA and state and local housing authorities. Coordinating and effectively targeting assistance at the local level is achieved through groups such as local Housing Review Teams and by a new system known as Coordinated Entry and Assessment.

Going beyond simple program eligibility designed to manage budgets, more housing programs now use prioritization to match a family or individual with the *most* appropriate housing, case management or financial assistance. Our departments now measure program and system effectiveness primarily by how rapidly homeless families can be-rehoused and how long they subsequently remain stably housed.

Some Examples of Key Programs, Groups and Systems for Reducing Child Homelessness in Vermont:

- **Targeted Rental Assistance:** *Vermont Rental Subsidy program; Family Unification Vouchers*
- **Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Assistance:** *Housing and Opportunity Grant Program; Reach Up Housing Grants.*
- **Supportive Services:** *Family Supportive Housing; Housing Retention Teams; Reach Up Case Management.*
- **Access to Housing:** *DHCD's HUD Consolidated Plan; VHFA's Qualified Allocation Plan; VHCB Affordable and Supportive Housing; Governor Shumlin's 15% Housing for the homeless executive order.*
- **Statewide Coordination of Resources:** *Governor's Council on Homelessness; Continuum of Care.*
- **Local Coordination of Resources:** *Housing Review Teams; Coordinated Entry and Assessment.*

The Work Ahead – Bringing Success to Scale

While the official number of homeless families and children is declining, we know from program data and local partners that many children who are not counted as homeless live in housing which is tenuous at best. These families who are precariously housed or “doubled-up” with friends or relatives face challenges to exiting poverty. With an understanding of the data, a knowledge of what works, and a keen awareness of Vermont's shortage of rental housing, we are looking at what programs should be brought to scale and what strategic housing investments made to continue to reduce homelessness, housing instability and poverty in Vermont.