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*Agency of Human Services*

## ***Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP)*** ***Vermont Annual Report - State Fiscal Year 2016***

Vermont's Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP), formerly known as the Emergency Solutions Grant program, administered by the State Office of Economic Opportunity, provides a blend of state and federal<sup>1</sup> funding to support operations, staffing, and homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing assistance at approximately 40 non-profit emergency shelter, transitional housing, and prevention programs serving all regions of the state. This past year, approximately \$790,000 in funds from the General Assistance Emergency Housing program was strategically invested under the Housing Opportunity Grant Program into new community-based programs designed to decrease reliance on motels to shelter homeless persons and families. These GA funds supported 12 initiatives, and the outcomes from these projects are included as part of this statewide report.

The State Office of Economic Opportunity works in close partnership with both HUD-recognized Homeless Continua of Care – Chittenden County and the Balance of State (i.e., the Chittenden Homeless Alliance and the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness) - to consult on performance measurement, data management, and developing coordinated entry within both systems of care. This report details the services and shelter provided by publicly-funded, privately operated non-profit partners. It provides insight into changes in the population experiencing homelessness in Vermont, as it details the level of service and results achieved by this system of care. It is best understood in tandem with reports from the General Assistance program and the statewide homeless Point-in-Time count.

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Emergency Solutions Grant and Global Commitment Investment

## **Overnights Sheltered**

Between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016, Vermont's publicly-funded emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, and youth shelters, reported the following.

- **4,143** persons sheltered for a total of **173,840** shelter bed nights.
- **3,263** were adults and **880** were children under the age of 18.
- The average length of stay was approximately **39** days.

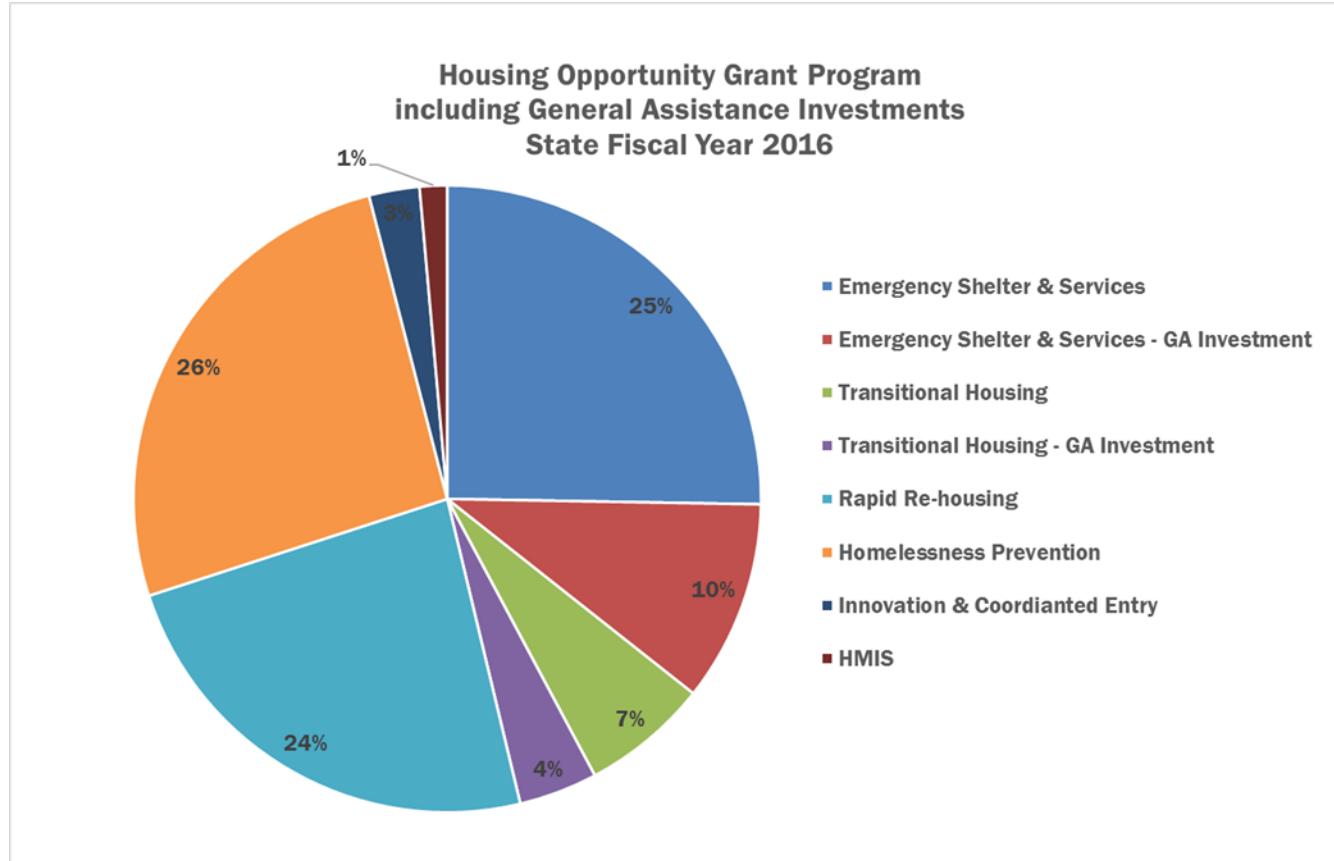
Housing Opportunity Grant Program funds support basic operations and essential services at 29 overnight emergency shelters, including 6 warming shelters open only during cold weather months and 9 shelters for persons fleeing domestic/sexual violence. In addition, HOP funding supported 2 day shelters for people experiencing homelessness. Shelters range in size from only a few rooms for families to more than forty beds for single adults. In some cases, a crisis bed is provided in a scattered site program with a short-term apartment stay.

## **Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing**

Other HOP-funded programs provide homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing assistance such as housing support services and financial aid to prevent eviction or help a family enter new housing. These activities provided housing stability for **5,002** persons in **1,426** households, approximately 42% of these households were literally homeless.

Both homelessness prevention and rapid-rehousing strategies provide housing relocation and stabilization support such as housing search and placement, landlord-tenant mediation, housing case management, follow-up or supportive services to help maintain housing, money management and financial assistance such as security deposits, utility payments and deposits, moving costs, rental arrearages and short-term rental assistance. Using the AHS/HUD definition, homelessness prevention targets assistance to those who are "at-risk of homelessness" (e.g., "couch surfing", exiting an institution, or facing eviction) whereas rapid re-housing serves those experiencing literal homelessness (e.g., sleeping in a place not meant for habitation or staying in an emergency shelter).

Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing services in this report are only those paid for in whole or part with Housing Opportunity Grant Program dollars. Numbers do not reflect other activities by these grantee providers paid for with funding such as Crisis Fuel, Vermont Rental Subsidy, FEMA, or Community Services Block Grants. Though in reality, community-based providers often combine these various resources in order to meet the presenting needs.



Approximately \$5.4 million in state and federal funding was awarded under the Housing Opportunity Grant program (a significant increase over 2015 awards totaling \$2 million). As of State Fiscal Year 2016, funding previously awarded under the "Community Housing Grant Program" and the "Emergency Solutions Grant Program" was consolidated into a single grant program to create greater flexibility, maximize resources, and streamline administration. Additionally, nearly \$790,000 in funds from the General Assistance Emergency Housing program was invested in 12 projects to create or expand community capacity to meet emergency housing needs in the following AHS districts: Barre, Burlington, Middlebury, St. Johnsbury, Newport, Brattleboro, and Hartford.

Nearly half of all HOP funds supported direct service staff, such as case managers or housing specialists. Approximately one-fifth of funds supported basic shelter and short-term transitional operations, such as utilities, rent, building insurance, shelter supplies or basic maintenance. More than \$1 million was provided in client financial or rental assistance such as security deposit, rental or utility arrearages, or short-term rental assistance. The remaining funds (approximately \$200,000) supported the implementation of HMIS, coordinated entry, and innovative projects such as landlord liaisons.

## **Emergency Shelter**

### **Persons Served, Demographics, Bednights & Length of Stay**

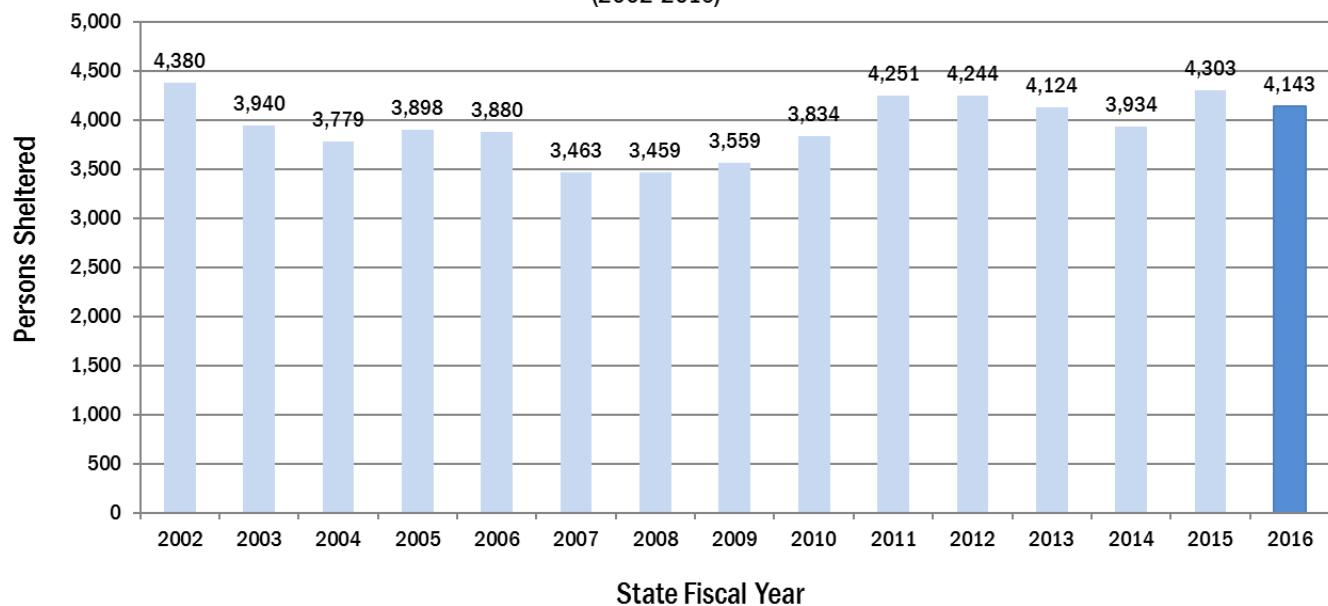
Overall, while the number of persons staying in publicly-funded emergency shelters decreased slightly last year, the number of children increased, and the average length of stay in shelters increased significantly. Approximately 38% of children and 23% of families spent their stay at a domestic/sexual violence shelter. Approximately 15% of all adults served by shelters, homelessness prevention or rapid re-housing programs were between the age of 18 and 24, and just four percent were elderly (263 persons). Of all those served, other special subpopulations identified include those who are: Veterans, 5%; experienced chronic homelessness, 9%; have a severe mental illness, 18%; have chronic substance abuse, 12%; living with another disability, 24%.

Statewide data can mask regional differences. Nearly half of all shelters reported increases in the number of persons served during SFY 2016. During this same time period, capacity to serve homeless families and individuals saw regional changes. For example, General Assistance investments support expanded seasonal shelter capacity for individuals in five communities (85 beds added); and short-term scattered site apartment capacity with services was increased by 36 rooms to serve families with children, as well as unaccompanied youth. Total persons served by shelters reflects changes in the homeless population, but is also impacted by changes in homeless shelter capacity.

It is also worth noting that both the number of bednights provided in emergency shelter and average length of stay in emergency settings increased. At the same time, the total number of persons sheltered decreased. There continue to be significant barriers for shelter guests to move out of emergency settings into housing. Lack of available rentals, the high cost of apartments, very low incomes, and tenant history are driving factors in the ability to quickly re-stabilize into housing. This difficulty in finding permanent housing artificially constrains the number of persons that can be sheltered within existing capacity.

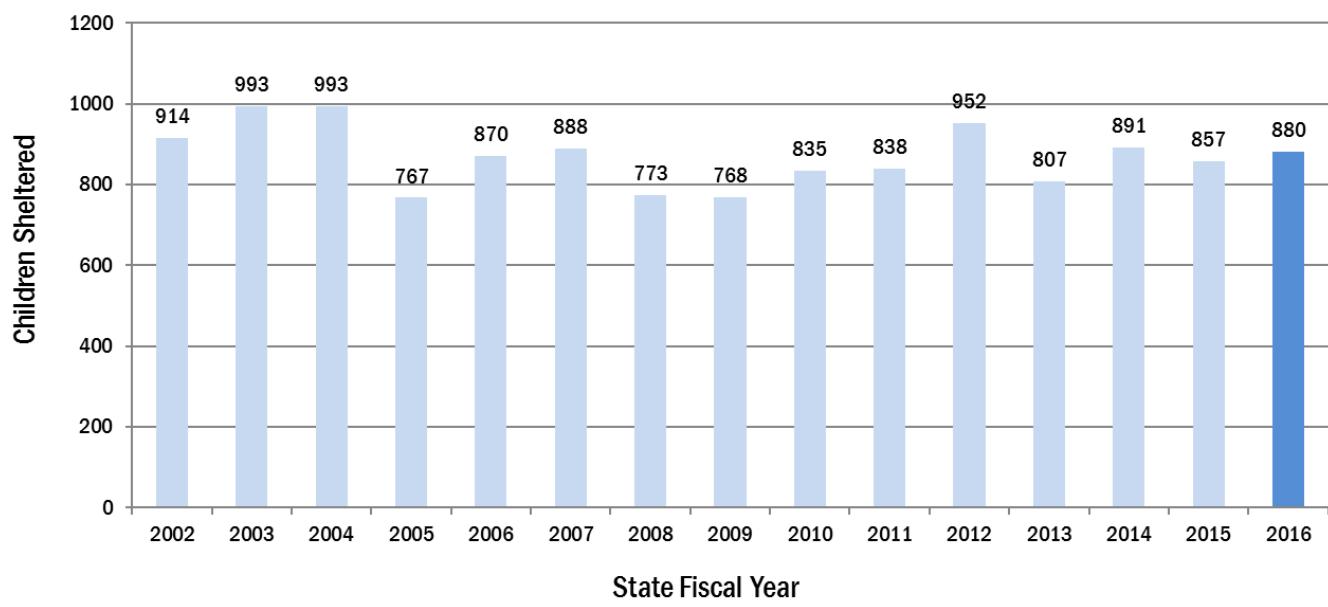
## Persons in Vermont's Publicly Funded Homeless Shelters

(2002-2016)

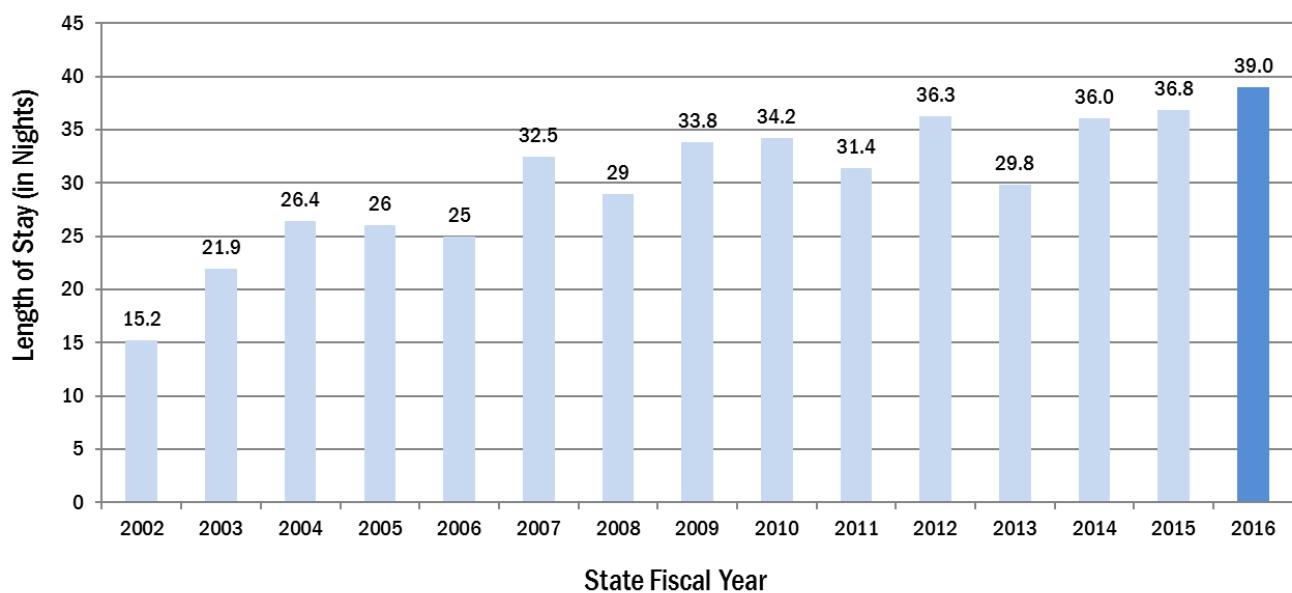


## Children in Vermont's Publicly Funded Homeless Shelters

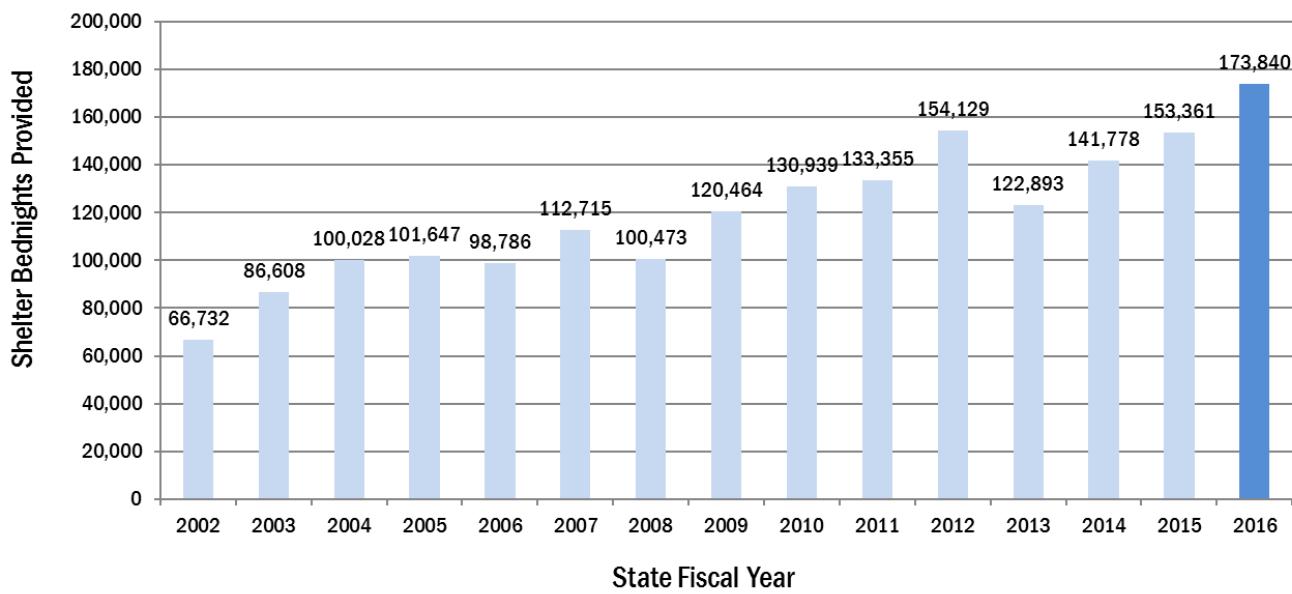
(2002-2016)



## Average Length of Vermont's Publicly Funded Shelter Stay (2002-2016)



## Shelter Bednights: Vermont's Publicly Funded Homeless Shelters (2002-2016)



**HOUSING OPPORTUNITY GRANT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE:** Grantees report on measures tied to the category of funding received: Shelter Operations, Case Management, Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing. Performance targets and 2016 performance are included below. By reporting the “% of Grantees Meeting Target”, the Office of Economic Opportunity is able to better understand which areas the network may require training and support to improve or where targets may need to be reconsidered.

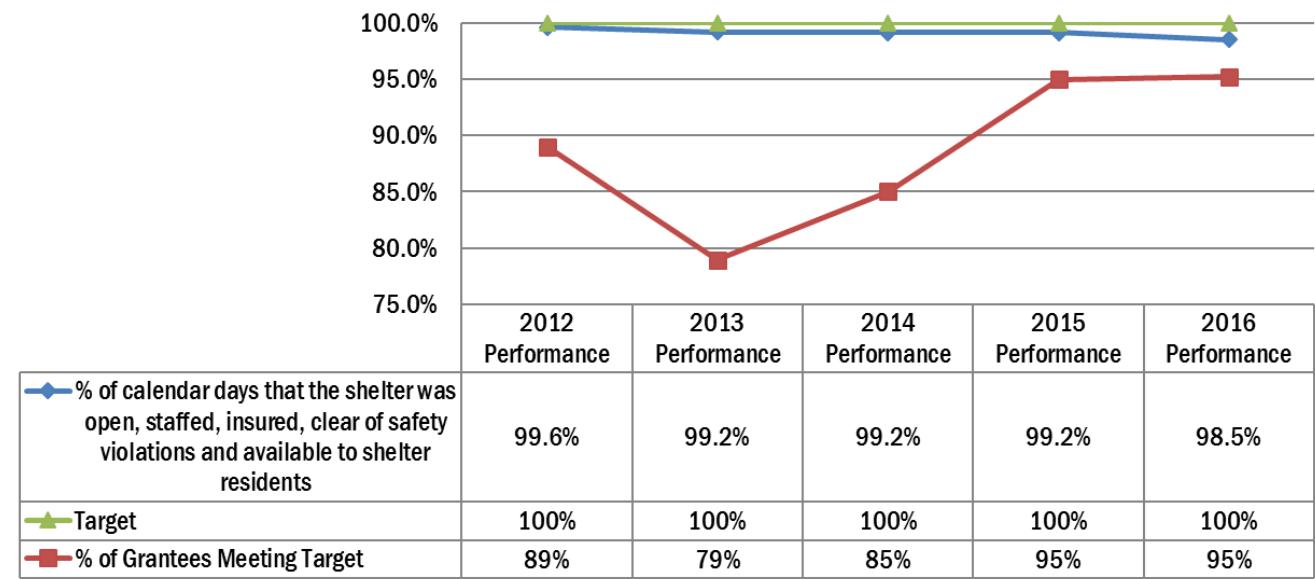
Performance Measures by Activity	Target	State FY 2016 Performance		% of Grantees Meeting Target
<b>EMERGENCY SHELTER OPERATIONS</b>				
Year-round Shelter facilities are open, staffed, insured, clear of safety violations, and available to shelter the homeless <sup>2</sup>	365 nights	Open 360 nights on average or 98.5%		95%
Warming/Seasonal shelter facilities are open, staffed, insured, clear of safety violations, and available to shelter the homeless	166 nights <sup>3</sup>	Open 165 nights on average or 99%		n/a
Shelter households (individuals or families) will have an initial meeting with a case manager (or equivalent) within 3 days of entering the program	90%	Emergency	93%	83%
		Transitional	94%	83%
		Youth	100%	100%
Households who exit emergency shelter, exit to stable permanent or transitional housing	baseline	43%		n/a
<b>YOUTH SHELTER &amp; SERVICES</b>				
Youth exiting the program will have “safe exits” as defined by one of the following: college, friends, home with family, independent living, job corps, military, relative’s home, or residential treatment/rehab	70%	100%		100%
<b>CASE MANAGEMENT<sup>4</sup></b>				
Homeless households referred for case management will meet with a case manager within 3 days of the referral.	90%	78%		65%
Within 90 days of referral, households receiving case management will have at least 1 adult who is employed, OR enrolled in an educational or training program, OR has qualified for income benefits such as TANF, SSI or GA	70%	56%		40%
Within 90 days of referral, households receiving case management will be stabilized in transitional or permanent housing	70%	40%		20%
Households stabilized or re-housed will continue to be in stable housing at least 90 days following assistance	70%	86%		84%
<b>HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION</b>				
Households at-risk of homelessness will have their housing stabilized or be safely re-housed within 28 days	70%	71%		69%
Households stabilized or re-housed will continue to be in stable housing at least 90 days following assistance	70%	83%		64%
<b>RAPID RE-HOUSING</b>				
Homeless households will be safely re-housed within 28 days	70%	51%		55%
Households re-housed will continue to be in stable housing at least 90 days following assistance	70%	88%		82%

<sup>2</sup> Figures do not include day shelters, warming shelters, or transitional housing.

<sup>3</sup> 166 nights is November 1<sup>st</sup> – April 15<sup>th</sup>, cold weather months.

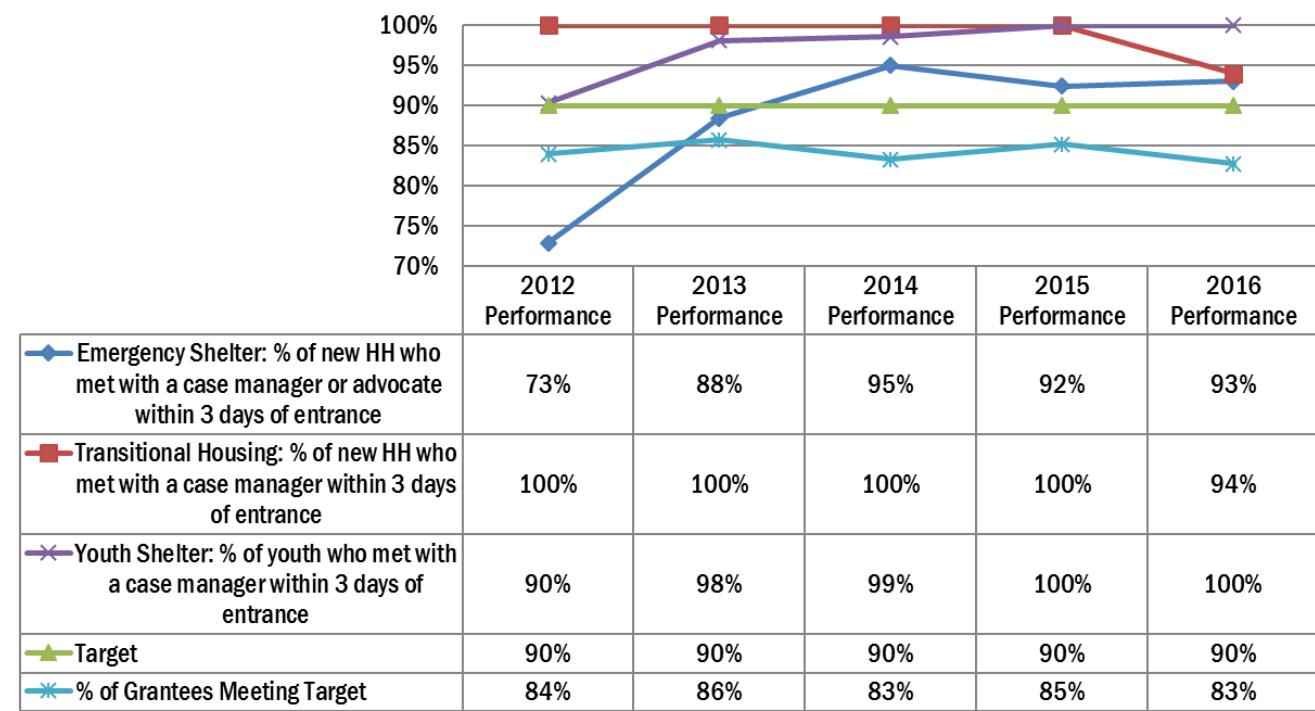
<sup>4</sup> Only organizations that receive funding for case management report on these performance measures. The number of households referred for case management nearly doubled between 2015 and 2016, increasing from 1,652 to 3,155.

## Housing Opportunity Program Performance: Emergency Shelter Operations

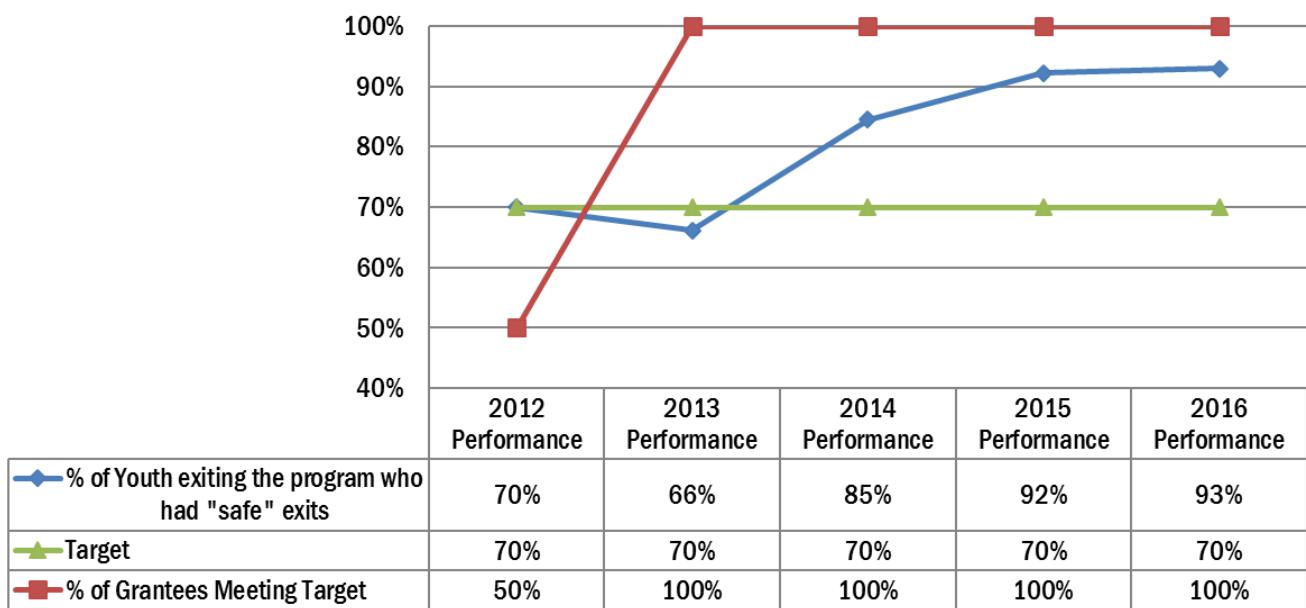


Statewide, our year-round emergency shelters were open and available to shelter the homeless for 98.5% of calendar days.

## Housing Opportunity Program Performance: Shelter Operations, Service Referral

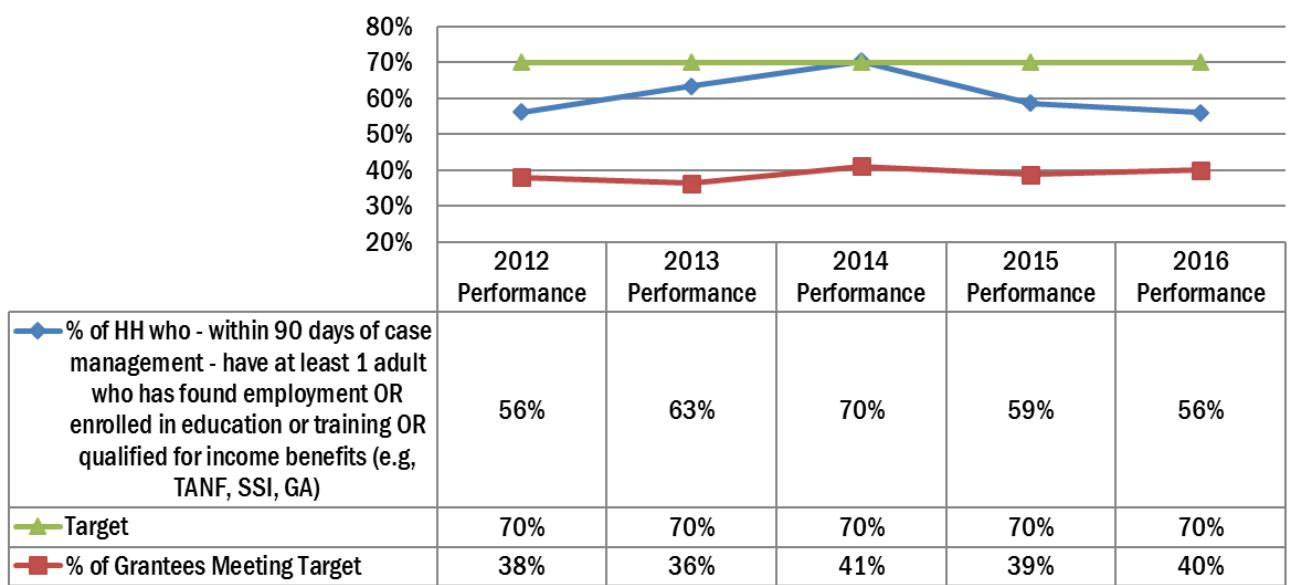


## Housing Opportunity Program Performance: Youth Shelter & Services

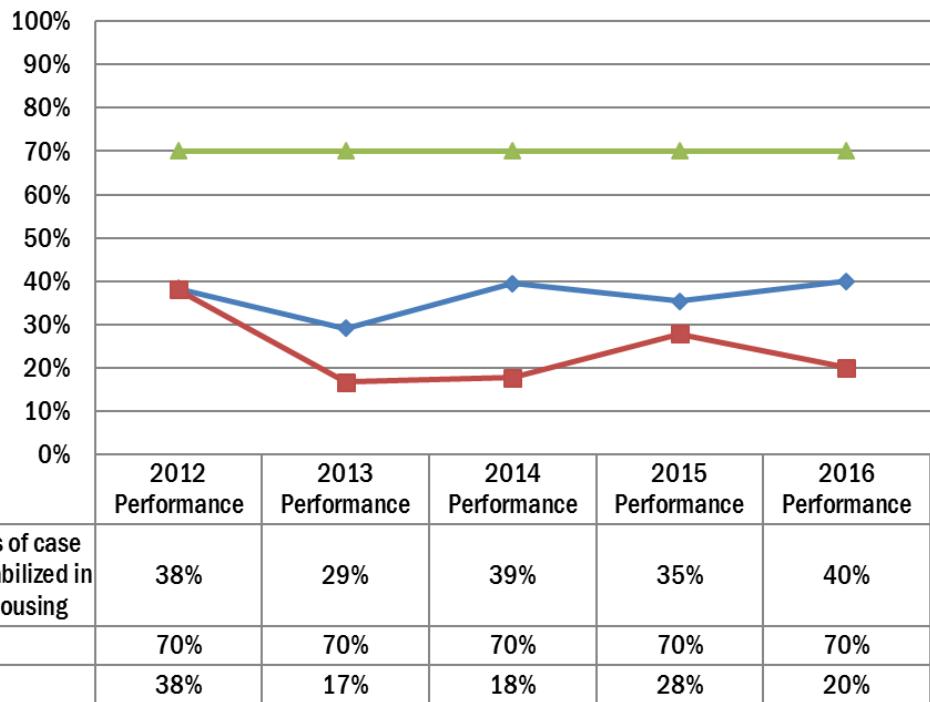


While it is difficult to draw broad conclusions about the efficacy of all homeless assistance programs from these performance measures, it is clear that some strategies are successful. Access to case management and supportive services is critical for households experiencing homelessness; however, financial assistance and services together through rapid re-housing demonstrates an effective combination of resources to help families achieve and maintain housing stability. In 2016, 86% of households who were stabilized in transitional or permanent housing continued to be stably housed for at least 90 days.

## Housing Opportunity Program Performance: Case Management for Homeless Households (HH), Income



## Emergency Solutions Grant Performance: Case Management for Homeless Households (HH), Housing



## Emergency Solutions Grant Performance: Case Management for Homeless Households (HH), Housing Stability

