

VT COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Emergency Services

Housing Assistance - Community Action Housing Assistance Program staff work with families to stabilize their housing and prevent homelessness. As Housing Advocates, we provide information and referrals to help you secure affordable housing in our community. If you are eligible, we may provide financial assistance to help with security deposits or rental arrears. You may also be referred to other resources and services that can help you avoid falling behind in the future.

Emergency Fuel and Utility Assistance also called Crisis Fuel Assistance -Are you in danger of running out of fuel to heat your home? Have you received a disconnect notice from the utility company? You might qualify for Crisis Fuel Assistance. This program provides help to home owners or renters who pay for heat or who have heat included in their rent. You might also qualify for furnace repair or replacement. We can help you with a home heating emergency. If you're eligible, we can help you with:

- Purchasing the primary source of your heat (oil, natural or propane gas, wood, electric)
- Avoiding disconnect of electric service
- Repairing or replacing your furnace if you are a homeowner

3 Square Outreach - 3SquaresVT helps Vermonters stretch their food budgets and put three square meals a day on their tables. Eating healthier food is good for you and benefit dollars are good for Vermont's economy. 3SquaresVT is a federal USDA program administered in Vermont by the Department for Children and Families, Economic Services Division – putting healthy food within reach. Community Action Agencies will help you fill out the application form, if you wish. 3SquaresVT is for everyone who qualifies, including individuals, families, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Farm to Family Coupons - Farm to Family Coupons, also known as Farmer's Market Coupons, will be distributed at our Community Action offices beginning Monday, June 23rd. These popular coupons provide a \$30 benefit and can be used to purchase fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables at participating farmer's markets around Vermont.

They are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis, and our supplies are limited. We often run out of non-senior coupons within the first week.

PLEASE NOTE: If your household receives WIC, you must get your coupons through the WIC office, not through Community Action

Food Shelves - Community Action Agencies offer food shelves to their communities. While there are differences from program to program, groceries, hot meals, home delivery, education and nutritional services help to address food scarcity and hunger that faces Vermonters with low income.

Stabilization Services

Head Start - Head Start and Early Head Start are federally-funded, national child and family development programs which provide comprehensive services for pregnant women, children from birth to age five, and their families. Services for children promote school readiness, and include early education, health, nutrition, mental health, and services for children with special needs. Services for parents promote family engagement, and include parent leadership and social service supports. Champlain Valley Head Start offers center-based and home-based services to eligible families in various locations the state of Vermont.

Weatherization Services -Does the wind whip through your doors, windows and walls? Does the old furnace blast fumes into your house or apartment? Are fuel bills piling up and you're still cold? If you qualify, Weatherization can help you with:

- An energy audit to identify potential improvements in energy efficiency comfort, and ways to save you money on your fuel bills.
- A check-up on your heating system to ensure safety, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- Free lighting and appliance upgrades (where applicable) through our partnership with Efficiency Vermont.
- Renovation construction services from a qualified crew, including materials and supplies.

Vermont Tenants - Provides free information and referral services directly to tenants by phone and face-to-face tenant counseling. VTI designs and conducts workshops on residential rental housing laws, codes and code enforcement. Our workshops are custom designed to meet the particular needs of participating groups. Contact Us: 802-864-0099 or toll free at 1-800-287-7971

Fair Housing Project - If you or your organization need information, training, referral services regarding fair housing rights, and responsibilities the FHP can assist you. The FHP works with our partners to eradicate illegal housing discrimination in Vermont. We may be able to help you through our information and referral services, fair housing education, training, workshops and outreach. In collaboration with organizations such as the Vermont Human Rights Commission, Regional Planning Commissions and Vermont Legal Aid we can help you can get a spectrum of services ranging from individual assistance with fair housing issues to workshops for municipal planners and zoning administrators.

Does your municipality want to have fair housing assessments and training regarding Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing? We can provide these services.

You have recourse if you have been discriminated against in housing in Vermont. Through appropriate referral services we help further enforcement of fair housing laws in Vermont

Mobile Home Program

If you live in a mobile home or a mobile home park anywhere in Vermont, we are here to answer your individual questions and support your resident association or cooperative.

Call us at (802) 660-3455 x204

Asset Development and Services to Thrive

Microbusiness Whether your plan is for a one person operation or includes employees, whether it's part time or full time, whether it will be bootstrapped or loan funded, our knowledgeable and respectful business counselor is ready to assist with:

- Thinking through your business idea
- Discussing how ready you are to run a business
- Educating you about essential business skills
- Creating a business plan
- Connecting you to other helpful resources
- Getting your credit in order
- Applying for business funding
- Much more!

Individual Development Accounts

The program will match each dollar you save with another \$2. If you save the allowed maximum of \$1,000, you will get another \$2,000 in match and have \$3,000 at the end of 24 months.

In addition, the program can enroll you in services to support you in saving and attaining your goal. When you are ready to spend your savings and match, a written plan with financial quotes from vendors is required. With an Individual Development Account (IDA), you save for up to 24 months for one of the following goals:

- Buying a first home
- Getting education after high school
- Starting or expanding a business

Community Kitchen Academy

Community Kitchen Academy is a Vermont Foodbank culinary job training program operated at CVOEO and Capstone. Professional chefs teach unemployed and underemployed Vermonters marketable skills that prepare them for sustainable careers in the food service industry and help break the cycle of poverty and hunger.

Each 13-week session of Community Kitchen Academy contains 10-12 students. To prepare these students with the culinary skills necessary to secure jobs in the food service industry, the professional Chef Instructors delivers a proven curriculum that was developed by the Rhode Island Community Food Bank.

Financial Capabilities

To overcome barriers to financial security, "Financial Capability" education & coaching services empower people to stabilize their finances, set goals and work to achieve them, and sustain successful financial behaviors over time. The knowledge and skills gained by low-income Vermonters will enable them to better manage their scarce resources, repair or build credit, and establish or strengthen connections to financial institutions.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program - The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) offers free tax preparation for anyone with annual income of less than \$54,000. In FY2016, the VT CAAs completed 3,536 Federal returns and 3,544 State returns. The total refunds and tax credits brought \$4.6 million back into the state economy and helped stabilize low-income Vermont households.

Workforce Development/Training Initiatives - The VT CAAs offer a number of workforce initiatives that address persistent barriers to employment faced by disadvantaged workers with no, little, or unsuccessful work experiences, and who need customized and comprehensive training and services to overcome those obstacles, such as job readiness programs that help a wide range of groups, including at-risk youth to obtain their first jobs, and incarcerated individuals to gain core life & workplace skills to enter the workforce when they're released

Other Resources

Community Housing Grant - The primary objectives of the Community Housing Grants are:

- To prevent an individual or family from becoming homeless or to help an individual or family regain stability in current housing or other permanent housing;
- To help individuals or families living in shelters, publicly-funded motels, or places not meant for human habitation to move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieve stability in that housing;
- To provide case management for homeless individuals and families which will provide coordination for the household and provide more intensive interaction and services for clients deemed unlikely to resolve their housing crisis with short-term financial assistance alone.

Emergency Solution Program—The Emergency Solutions Program offers supportive services for homeless families and individuals and implement effective homeless prevention and rapid re-housing initiatives through the Vermont Community Action Partnership Agencies within the local Continuum of Care.

Rapid Re-housing of the homeless Services are used to help individuals or families living in shelters, publicly funded motels, or places not meant for human habitation to move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieve stability in that housing. Eligible activities include housing relocation and stabilization service, short term financial assistance and/or rental assistances for up to 12 months including rental arrears.

Homelessness prevention services are used to prevent an individual or family from becoming homeless including avoiding moving into an emergency shelter, the streets, a publicly funded motel or a place not meant for human habitation or to help an individual or family regain stability in their current housing or other permanent housing. Services include housing relocation and stabilizations services including short term financial assistance and/or rental assistance for up to 12 months including rental arrears.

Vermont Health Connect Navigators - In person help with finding the right insurance options through the Vermont Health Connect Exchange. Navigators are available now in Vermont Community Action Partnership Agencies throughout the state to help individual Vermonters, small employers, and their employees understand their health care options. Navigators are able to assist you with finding a health plan that meets your needs and budget, completing an application, and, if you qualify, accessing financial help.

VITA – The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program - The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program offers free tax help to people who generally make \$54,000 or less, persons with disabilities, the elderly and limited English speaking taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals. Each Community Action Agency in VT offers this service from February 1st through April 15th. Efforts are coordinated with trained volunteers.

WARMTH Program – The WARMTH Support Program provides supportive services and/or limited assistance in the payment of home fuel and utility bills to households to households facing a home Heating crisis. WARMTH is a program administered by the Vermont Community Action Partnership Agencies with sponsorship of participating fuel suppliers and utilities and private donations. The WARMTH Program is intended to supplement and extend available resources, and not to replace any ongoing programs and services.

Community Action Programs are responsible for eligibility determination and distribution of funds to those eligible. The WARMTH Program is operational from November through April.