

Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP) ***Annual Report - State Fiscal Year 2017***

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 federal¹ funding to support operations, staffing, and homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing assistance at approximately 38 non-profit emergency shelter, transitional housing, and prevention programs serving all regions of the state. This past year, approximately \$1.5 million 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 18 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.

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

Overnights Sheltered

Between July 1, 2016 and June 30, 2017, Vermont's publicly-funded emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, and youth shelters, reported the following:

- **3,952** persons (58% single adults and 42% in families with children) sheltered for a total of **175,997** bednights.²
- **2,857** were adults and **1,095** were children under the age of 18.
- The average length of stay was approximately **44** days.

Housing Opportunity Grant Program funds support basic operations and essential services at 36 overnight emergency shelters, including 9 warming shelters open only during cold weather months and 9 shelters for persons fleeing domestic/sexual violence. Additionally, 8 programs provided emergency shelter in scattered site apartments, ranging in size from 1 to 3 bedrooms. Shelters range in size from only a few rooms for families to more than 37 beds for single adults.

Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing

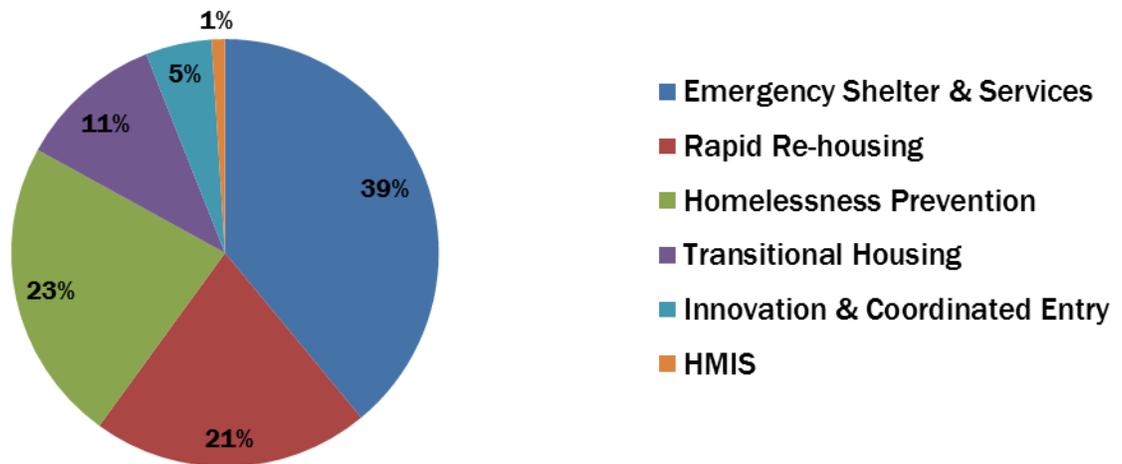
Other HOP-funded programs provide homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing assistance such as housing support services and financial aid to prevent eviction or help a family enter new housing. Using the AHS/HUD definition, homelessness prevention targets assistance to those who are "at-risk of homelessness" (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). These activities provided housing stability for **4,282** persons in **1,696** households, approximately 45% 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.

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.

² One bednight = One person sheltered for one night. Total bednights = Number of persons x the number of nights sheltered.

Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP) SFY 2017 Awards



More than \$6.2 million in state and federal funding was awarded under the Housing Opportunity Grant program. 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. More than \$1.5 million in funds from the General Assistance Emergency Housing program was invested in 18 projects through the Housing Opportunity Grant Program to create or expand community capacity to meet emergency housing needs in the following AHS districts: Addison, Barre, Bennington, Burlington, Brattleboro, Hartford, Rutland, St. Johnsbury and Newport. This was an increase of over \$700,000 over SFY 16 GA investments.

Approximately 46% of all HOP funds supported direct service staff, such as shelter case managers or housing specialists. Just under 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 \$1.35 million was provided in client financial or rental assistance such as security deposit, rental or utility arrearages, or short- and medium-term rental assistance. The remaining funds (approximately \$500,000) supported the implementation of HMIS, coordinated entry, and innovative projects such as landlord liaisons.

Emergency Shelter Persons Served, Demographics, Bednights & Length of Stay

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 33% of children (361) and 37% of families (243) spent their stay at a domestic/sexual violence shelter. Approximately 17% of all adults (1,012) served by shelters, homelessness prevention or rapid re-housing programs were between the age of 18 and 24, and just 6% were elderly (367). Of all those served, other special subpopulations identified include those who are: Veterans (3%); experienced chronic homelessness³ (7%); have a severe mental illness (16%); have chronic substance abuse (9%); living with another disability (19%).

Statewide data can mask regional differences. More than half of all shelters reported increases in the number of persons served during SFY 2017. During this same period, capacity to serve homeless families and individuals saw regional changes. For example, General Assistance investments expanded capacity an additional:

- 77 beds of seasonal shelter
- 10 beds of year-round emergency shelter capacity
- 10 rooms of emergency shelter for domestic violence survivors
- 3 programs provided overflow motel capacity for domestic violence survivors
- 36 bedrooms of emergency shelter in short-term apartments for families.

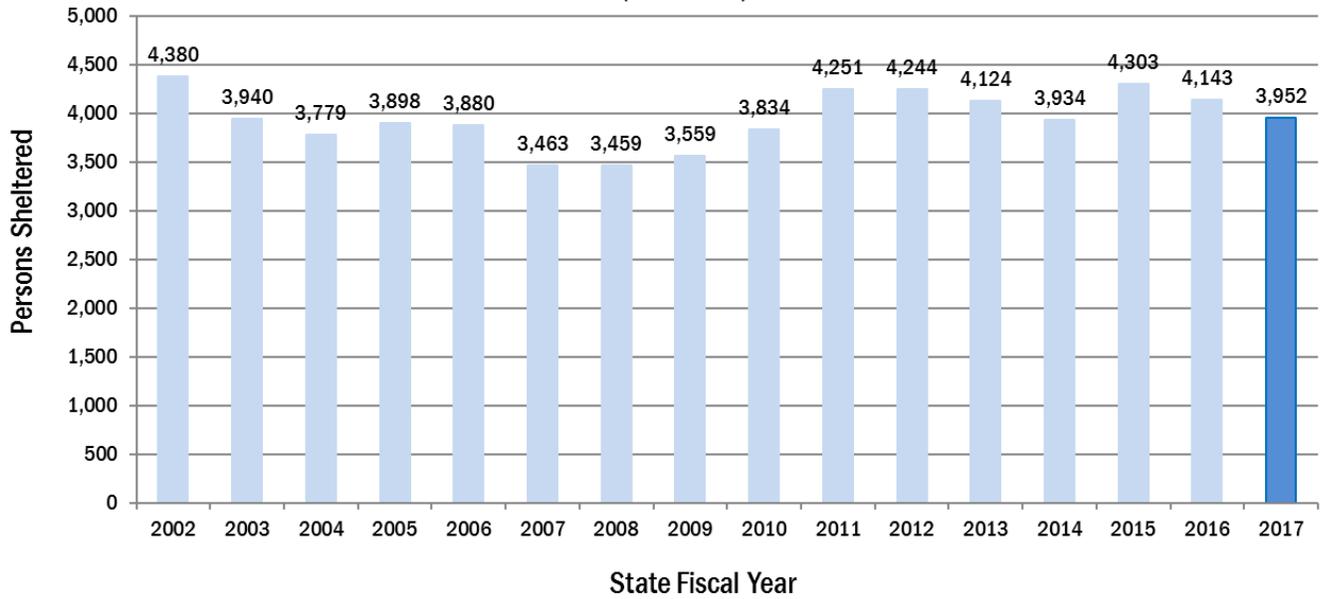
Total persons served by shelters reflects changes in the homeless population, but is also impacted by changes in homeless shelter capacity.

It is also worth noting that while the total number of persons sheltered decreased, the number of bednights provided in emergency shelter and average length of stay in emergency settings increased at the same time. In fact, the average length of stay is at its highest level in more than 15 years. 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.

³ HUD definition of chronic homelessness: “To be considered chronically homeless, an individual or head of household must meet the definition of ‘homeless individual with a disability’ from the McKinney-Vento Act, as amended by the HEARTH Act and have been living in a place not meant for human habitation, in an emergency shelter, or in a safe haven for the last 12 months continuously or on at least four occasions in the last three years where those occasions cumulatively total at least 12 months”

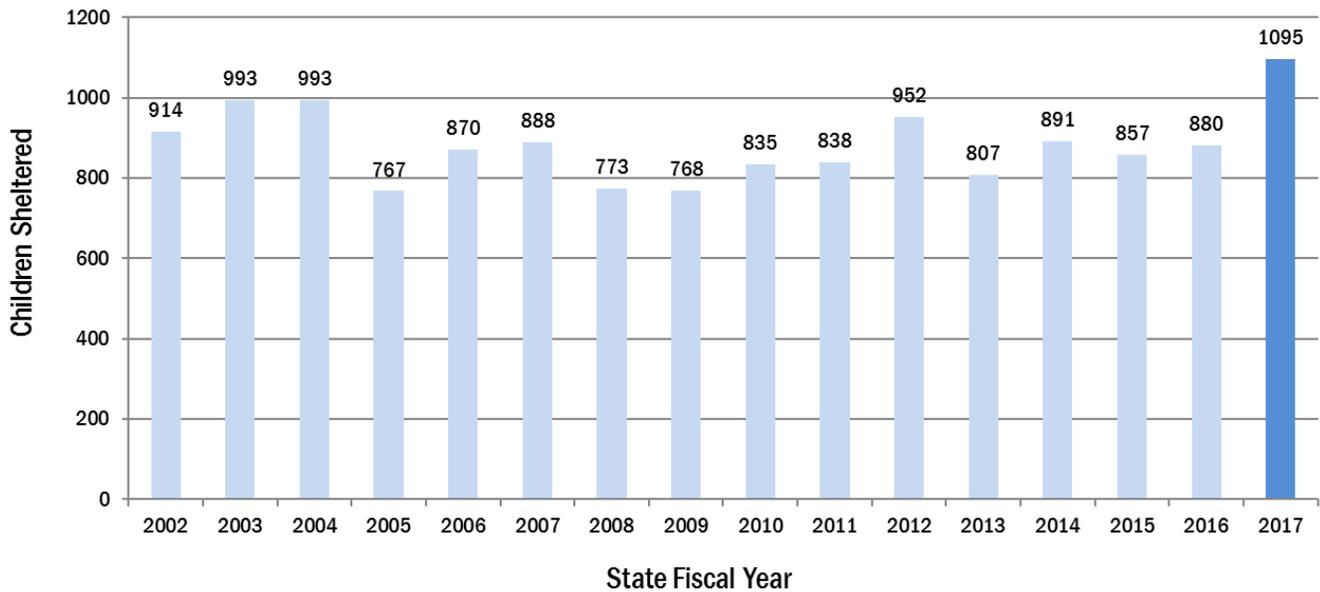
Persons in Vermont's Publicly Funded Homeless Shelters

(2002-2017)



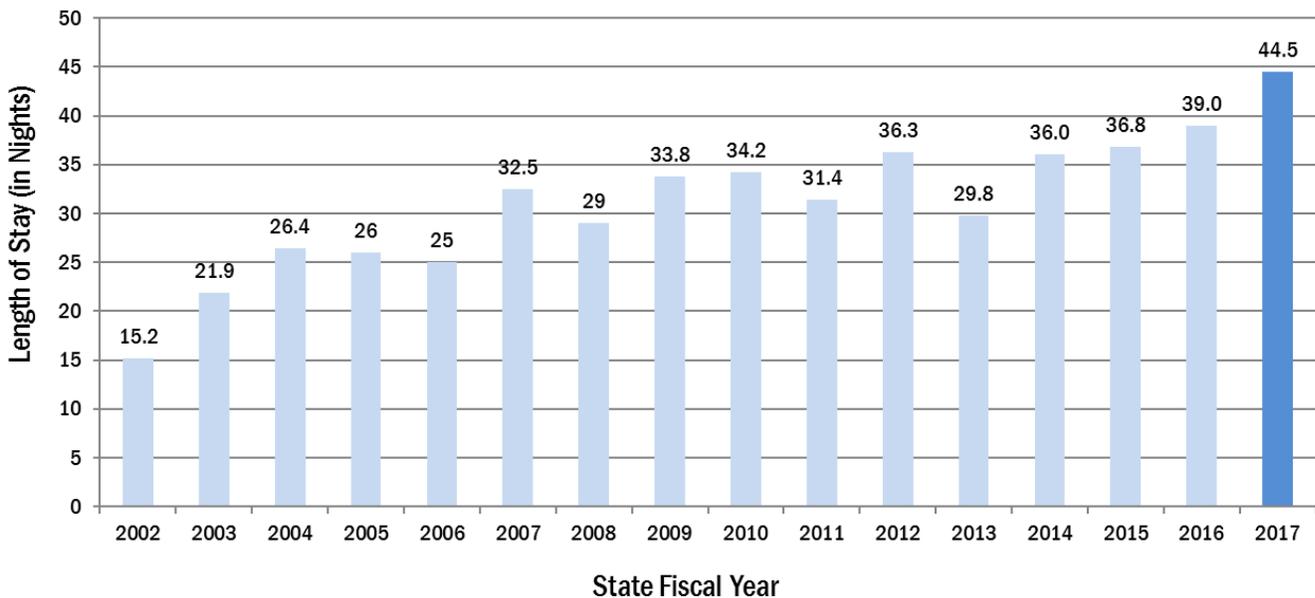
Children in Vermont's Publicly Funded Homeless Shelters

(2002-2017)

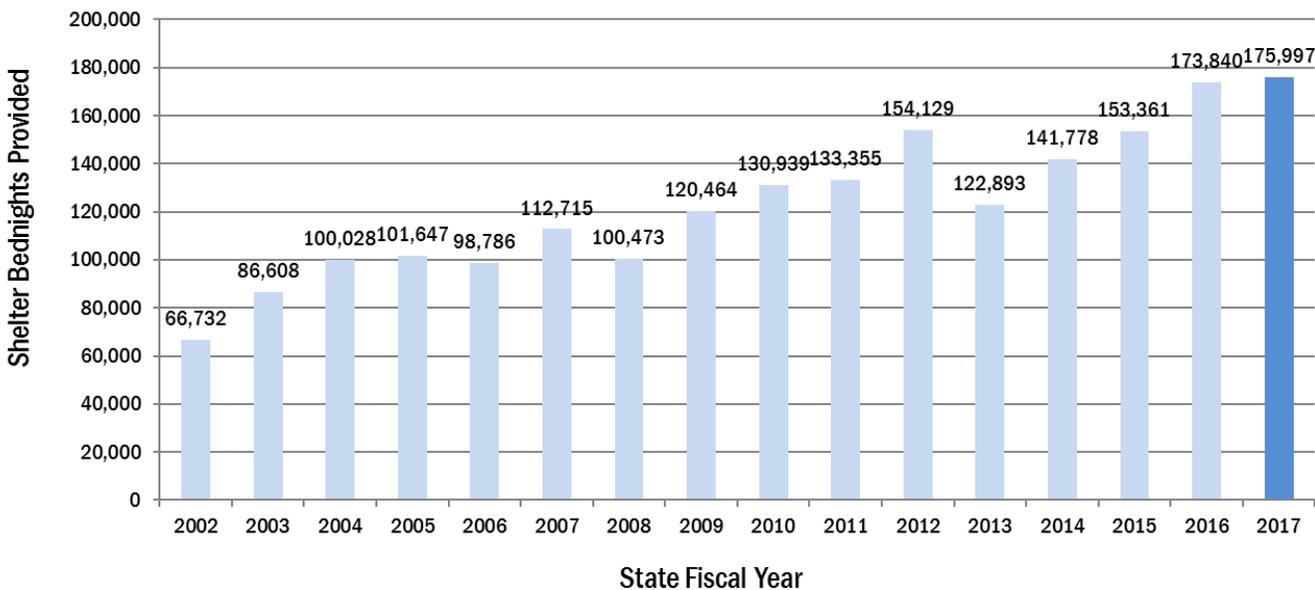


While the number of persons in shelter decreased, there was a significant increase in the number of children in shelter. Some of this increase is due to expanded capacity through emergency apartments in areas where no shelter capacity for families previously existed.

Average Length of Vermont's Publicly Funded Shelter Stay (2002-2017)



Shelter Bednights: Vermont's Publicly Funded Homeless Shelters (2002-2017)



Housing Opportunity Grant Program Performance

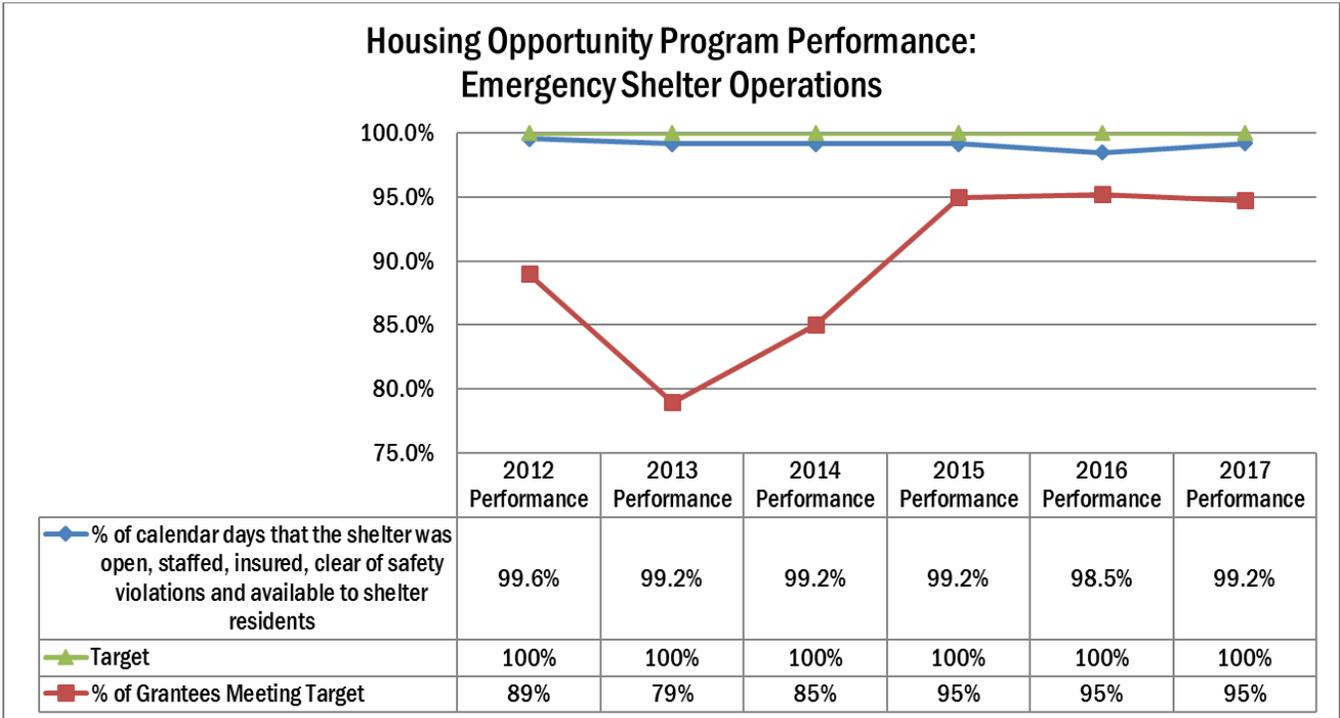
Grantees report on measures tied to the category of funding received: Shelter Operations, Case Management, Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing. Performance targets and 2017 performance are included below. By reporting the “% of Grantees Meeting Target”, the Office of Economic Opportunity is 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 2017 Performance	% of Grantees Meeting Target
EMERGENCY SHELTER OPERATIONS			
Year-round Shelter facilities are open, staffed, insured, clear of safety violations, and available to shelter the homeless ⁴	365 nights	Open 364 nights on average or 99.2%	95%
Warming/Seasonal shelter facilities are open, staffed, insured, clear of safety violations, and available to shelter the homeless	166 nights ⁵	Open 164 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	88%
		Transitional	100%
		Youth	100%
Households who exit emergency shelter, exit to stable permanent or transitional housing	baseline	38%	n/a
YOUTH SHELTER & SERVICES			
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%	92%	100%
CASE MANAGEMENT⁶			
Homeless households referred for case management will meet with a case manager within 3 days of the referral.	90%	86%	67%
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%	39%	22%
Within 90 days of referral, households receiving case management will be stabilized in transitional or permanent housing	70%	32%	17%
Households stabilized or re-housed will continue to be in stable housing at least 90 days following assistance	70%	80%	72%
HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION			
Households at-risk of homelessness will have their housing stabilized or be safely re-housed within 28 days	70%	67%	67%
Households stabilized or re-housed will continue to be in stable housing at least 90 days following assistance	70%	84%	78%
RAPID RE-HOUSING			
Homeless households will be safely re-housed within 28 days	70%	43%	44%
Households re-housed will continue to be in stable housing at least 90 days following assistance	70%	87%	67%

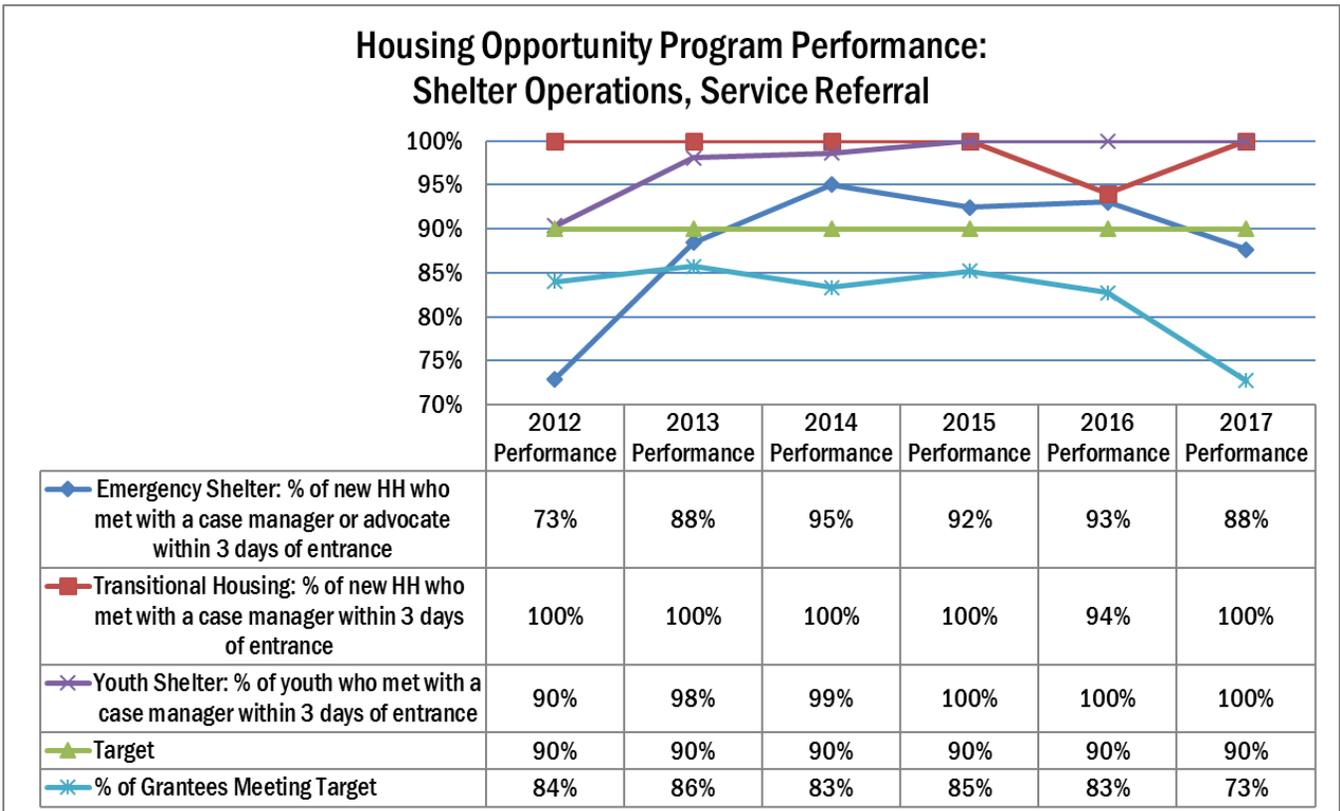
⁴ Figures do not include day shelters, warming shelters, or transitional housing.

⁵ 166 nights is November 1st – April 15th, cold weather months.

⁶ Only organizations that receive HOP funding for case management report on these performance measures.



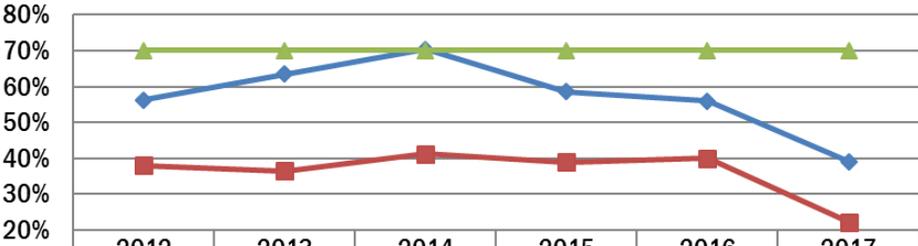
Statewide, year-round emergency shelters were open and available to shelter the homeless for 99.2% of calendar days.



Some emergency shelters provide services onsite, while other programs refer guests to another service provider for case management support. The Housing Opportunity Grant Program aims to ensure all shelter guests can meet with a case manager or advocate quickly after entry into a

program (i.e., within 3 days). Quickly connecting to case management helps to meet the basic needs of all guests and connect guests to a permanent housing pathway. While most households were connected to a case manager within 3 days (88%), the percentage of grantees able to meet this target (i.e., 90% of households) decreased significantly in SFY2017. This marked decrease in grantees meeting the target is attributed to an increase in seasonal warming shelters, which may struggle to (re-)establish connections with guests and service partners annually.

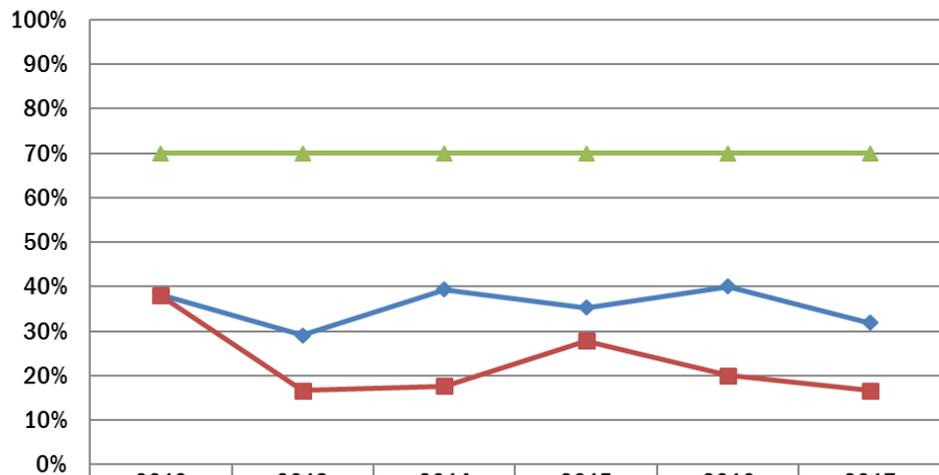
Housing Opportunity Program Performance: Case Management for Homeless Households (HH), Income



	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Performance	Performance	Performance	Performance	Performance	Performance	Performance
◆ % of HH who - within 90 days of case management - have at least 1 adult who has found employment OR enrolled in education or training OR qualified for income benefits (e.g, TANF, SSI, GA)	56%	63%	70%	59%	56%	39%
▲ Target	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%
■ % of Grantees Meeting Target	38%	36%	41%	39%	40%	22%

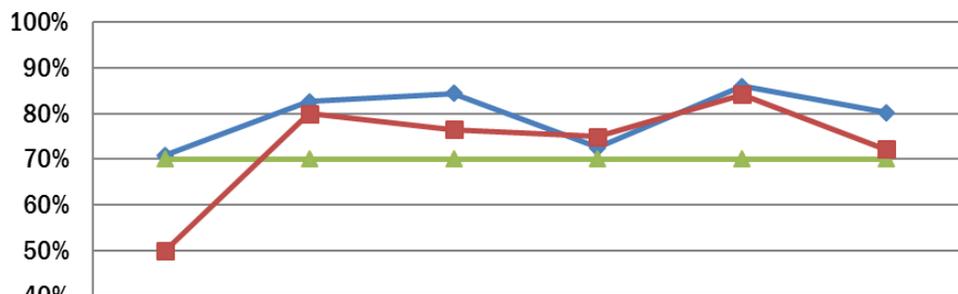
The percentage of households who found employment, enrolled in education/training, or increased their income via benefits within 90 days of receiving case management continued to decline this year. Based on the program’s performance over time, it’s clear that the target (70% of households) to achieve within 90 days is aspirational, even if still important. The marked decline in the percentage of grantees achieving the target in SFY 2017 requires additional consideration. Anecdotally, providers report that the many households experiencing homelessness are already employed, enrolled in training/education, and/or have maximized their benefits at entry into emergency shelter. Other providers report that these goals are achieved through case management, but sometimes take more than 90 days to accomplish and thus are not captured by the performance measure. Perhaps most significantly, the number of households referred for case management to a HOP-funded program more than tripled between 2015 and 2017, increasing from 1,652 to 3,155 to 5,232, without a requisite increase in case management capacity. The network’s declining performance may in part be attributed to increasing caseloads. OEO will focus additional training and technical assistance in the next few years on improving connections between homeless shelter/service providers with employment training and support resources, improved screening for employment and income through coordinated entry, and strengthening referrals to mainstream case management resources to leverage additional capacity.

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



	2012 Performance	2013 Performance	2014 Performance	2015 Performance	2016 Performance	2017 Performance
% of HH who - within 90 days of case management referral - are stabilized in transitional or permanent housing	38%	29%	39%	35%	40%	32%
Target	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%
% of Grantees Meeting Target	38%	17%	18%	28%	20%	17%

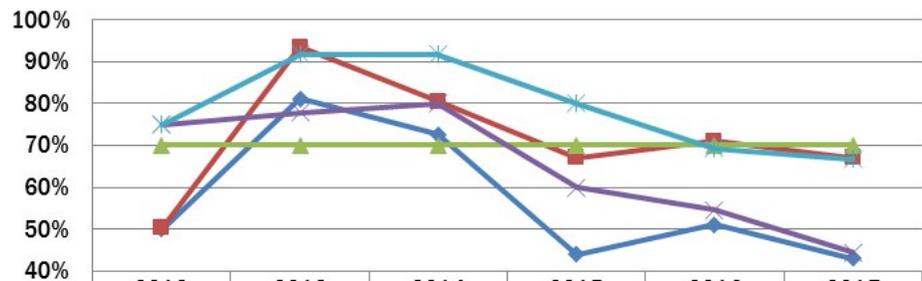
Emergency Solutions Grant Performance: Case Management for Homeless Households (HH), Housing Stability



	2012 Performance	2013 Performance	2014 Performance	2015 Performance	2016 Performance	2017 Performance
% of HH who were stabilized in transitional or permanent housing AND remained stably housed for at least 90 days	71%	83%	84%	73%	86%	80%
Target	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%
% of Grantees Meeting Target	50%	80%	76%	75%	84%	72%

In 2017, 80% of households who were stabilized in transitional or permanent housing continued to be stably housed for at least 90 days.

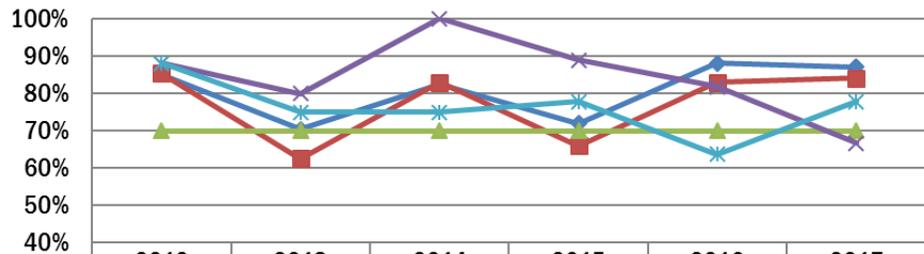
Housing Opportunity Program Performance: Homelessness Prevention & Rapid Re-Housing



	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	Performance	Performance	Performance	Performance	Performance	Performance
◆ % of homeless households who were re-housed within 28 days (rapid re-housing)	50%	81%	73%	44%	51%	43%
■ % of households at-risk of homelessness who were stabilized or re-housed within 28 days (prevention)	50%	93%	81%	67%	71%	67%
▲ Target	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%
✕ % of Grantees Meeting Target	75%	78%	80%	60%	55%	44%
✱ % of Homelessness Prevention Grantees Meeting Target	75%	92%	92%	80%	69%	67%

Since 2013, OEO has reported a steady decline in the percentage of households able to be stabilized in permanent housing within 28 days of program entry. The target to stabilize at least 70% of households within 28 days is an important aspirational goal, and now a national benchmark for rapid re-housing programs. Nonetheless, there are external factors that clearly impact this timeframe. The deepening affordable housing crisis has significant impact on the ability of clients to access affordable rental units. HOP investments in landlord liaison positions to focus on outreach and retention of landlords has proven a promising approach. This practice continues to be refined and expanded with HOP funding. In SFY 2018, HOP grantees will also report on the total percentage of households stabilized in permanent housing and the average length of time in the program prior to stabilization.

Emergency Solutions Grant Performance: Homelessness Prevention & Rapid Re-Housing - Housing Stability



	2012 Performance	2013 Performance	2014 Performance	2015 Performance	2016 Performance	2017 Performance
◆ % of homeless HH who remain in stable housing 90 days after assistance (rapid re-housing)	85%	70%	83%	72%	88%	87%
■ % of HH at-risk of homelessness who remain in stable housing 90 days after assistance (prevention)	85%	63%	83%	66%	83%	84%
▲ Target	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%
✕ % of Rapid Re-Housing Grantees Meeting Target	88%	80%	100%	89%	82%	67%
✱ % of Homelessness Prevention Grantees Meeting Target	88%	75%	75%	78%	64%	78%

Housing stability outcomes for Rapid Re-Housing and Homelessness Prevention programs were very positive. The percentage of households remaining stable 90 days after receiving assistance was 87% for Rapid Re-Housing, and 84% for Prevention, both of which exceed the target of 70%.

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.