

Memorandum

To: Travis Poulin, Co-Chair, Chittenden Homeless Alliance
Sarah Russell, Co-Chair, Chittenden Homeless Alliance
Renee Weeks, Co-Chair, Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness
Rebeka Lawrence, Co-Chair, Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness

From: Sarah Phillips, Director, Office of Economic Opportunity

Re: Emergency Housing – Transition Planning

Date: February 12, 2020

Dear Chittenden and Balance of State Continua of Care Chairs,

This memo includes the following:

- 1) **Local Motel Fund Administrators:** A request that local homeless Continua of Care (CoC) designate an agency to be the CoC's Motel Fund Administrator for SFY21; and guidance from the Department on designating this agency.
- 2) **Proposed Community Allocations:** Proposed allocation of funding to each local homeless CoC for SFY21 (transition year) and an explanation of the Department's methodology.
- 3) **Timeline:** A timeline on what local CoCs can expect from the Department over the next several months and some important dates.
- 4) **Contact Information**

Please join us on Wednesday, February 12, 12:30pm – 2:00pm for a webinar overview of the Emergency Housing Restructure. The webinar will be recorded and the recording can be accessed with the same link.

Register Here: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/2437151490437593347>



1) Local Motel Fund Administrators

The goal of the Emergency Housing Restructure is to decrease reliance on motels and ultimately decrease homelessness; however, the first year is recognized as an important transition year. Expanding local emergency shelter capacity and re-investing homeless assistance funds in homelessness prevention or re-housing efforts will take place more gradually over time. For this reason, SFY21 marks an important transition year.

Each local homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) is invited to identify an agency for SFY21 to apply for, receive, and administer funding for emergency shelter to eligible households through motel stays, support shelter/motel diversion activities, and to provide housing navigation services to households receiving emergency shelter in motels. The identified agency is noted below as the “Motel Fund Administrator”.

Local CoCs are best poised to determine which agency is eligible to receive funding from the Department, as the local CoC is charged with planning and collaboration to end homelessness in its geographic area.

Identified Motel Fund Administrators will be invited to apply for funding through a workplan and budget submittal process initiated in April 2020. Final awards will be determined and negotiated by the Department for Children and Families.

The Emergency Housing Restructure is intended to build on existing systems and roles within the local homeless CoC.

The Department for Children and Families expects local CoCs to identify Motel Fund Administrators, as follows:

- **One Motel Fund Administrator for households seeking emergency shelter/housing** (eligibility: AHS/HUD definition of homeless, categories 1, 2, 3, and 4). Motel Fund Administrators should be:
 - An emergency shelter provider (including emergency apartments, congregate shelter or seasonal shelter, etc.), with priority consideration for a year-round emergency shelter provider; or
 - The Lead Agency for coordinated entry.
- Local CoCs may designate a **second Motel Fund Administrator** for households seeking emergency shelter/housing (eligibility: AHS/HUD definition of homeless, category 4, fleeing/attempting to flee domestic/sexual violence) only if that community agency is a domestic violence shelter and service provider, and all households served as eligible under the AHS/HUD homeless category 4 definition are to be referred to this agency.



Please see Attachment A, AHS/HUD Definition of Homelessness.

Any community agency considering the role of a local Motel Fund Administrator is invited to contact DCF to discuss.

Local homeless CoCs are asked to identify Motel Fund Administrators by March 9th. Local CoC chairs are invited to contact DCF for additional information or support with decision-making.

2) Proposed Community Allocations:

Please see Attachment B, Emergency Housing SFY21 Proposed Allocations

During the transition of SFY21, the Department will allocate funding to each local CoC in order to meet emergency housing/shelter needs. In SFY21, eligible activities for funds will be:

- Motel Stays for Emergency Shelter
- Shelter Diversion
- Housing Navigation Services
- Administration

To the extent that project development for emergency shelter is already underway in a local CoC, these projects may be considered for funding through the spring workplan and budget process. SFY21 funding for any current General Assistance Community Investments will be considered separate from these community allocations.

Given the nature of the SFY21 transition, the Department has reviewed three years of motel utilization in every district. Community allocations are based on:

- A minimum amount of funding to support staffing infrastructure in every community. In even the smallest communities, there will be a need for new staffing to support intake and placement of Vermonters experiencing homelessness into motels.
- Average spending per AHS District over a three-year period: SFY17, SFY18 and SFY19. Year-to-date utilization and spending in SFY20 (July – December 2019) was reviewed for any new trends or shifts in utilization.
- Adjustments were made based on recent General Assistance Community Investments in Morrisville District (Lamoille Community House), St. Albans District (Voices Against Violence DV motel fund), Newport and St. Johnsbury Districts (Umbrella DV motel fund), and Springfield District (Women’s Freedom Center, DV motel fund).



Attachment B includes a comparison to SFY19 and three-year average General Assistance motel expenditures by district.

In addition, DCF’s budget proposal includes \$418,620 in one-time funding for the Emergency Housing initiative. These funds will be considered contingency funds and will be awarded as needed (i.e., based on motel utilization) during SFY21.

Please note, community allocations are subject to change. The Department welcomes feedback.

3) Timeline:

DCF expects that local CoCs will be working to:

- 1) engage in planning to support July 1st implementation of transition year, and
- 2) initiate ongoing local planning efforts to understand local needs, gaps and initiatives related to emergency shelter needs.

Local planning will be well served by a local review and analysis of information, a shared understanding of the problem including consumers, clearly defining roles and responsibilities and joint problem-solving. The timeline below outlines key steps from February to May; it is subject to changes and is being provided in the spirit of transparency and collaboration with community partners. The Agency of Human Services Field Directors have also committed to providing technical assistance and support for local planning efforts.

Department for Children & Families	Local CoCs and Community Agencies
FEBRUARY	
<p>Propose community allocations.</p> <p>Issue guidance on designating providers for SFY21.</p> <p>Answer questions about the initiative and support local decision making, including at the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness, Chittenden Homeless Alliance and Vermont Council on Homelessness meetings.</p> <p>Webinar Overview: Wednesday, Feb. 12th</p>	<p>Discuss proposal and provide feedback to DCF.</p> <p>Form emergency housing committee or working group.</p> <p>Designate Motel Fund Administrator(s) (by March 9th).</p> <p>Let DCF know what kind of information your local CoC needs for planning.</p> <p>Attend 2/12 webinar or listen to recording.</p>



MARCH	
<p>Provide data and tools to support local emergency shelter/emergency housing planning.</p> <p>Attend local CoC or emergency housing committee meetings, as needed.</p> <p>Hold public hearings as part of the repeal the General Assistance Emergency Housing rules.</p> <p>Propose draft changes to Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP) standards for provision of emergency shelter, review feedback.</p> <p>Work with Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness to finalize a template <i>Protocol for Emergency Shelter Referral and Coordination</i>.</p>	<p>Review and use data and tools to consider long-term planning goals and short-term (SFY21) operational needs.</p> <p>Consider changes to emergency shelter/housing access and coordinated entry processes for SFY21.</p> <p>Talk with local institutions and groups that refer to emergency housing/shelter – police, hospitals, treatment/recovery centers, corrections.</p> <p>Emergency housing/shelter providers review and revise communication protocols and systems.</p>
APRIL	
<p>April 8, Barre, VT - Host statewide planning day. All Local CoCs are invited to send a team of 5. More information is forthcoming.</p> <p>Release SFY21 Workplan and Budget Request with final community allocations, revised HOP standards for provision of emergency shelter.</p> <p>Provide guidance and training on shelter diversion/rapid resolution.</p> <p>Provide technical assistance on coordinated entry and emergency shelter coordination protocols.</p>	<p>Attend April 8 planning day and/or debrief with local CoC team.</p> <p>Identify local resources to support diversion and rapid resolution activities; participate in training.</p> <p>Finalize local protocol for daily coordination and referrals to and between emergency housing/shelter projects.</p> <p>Support SFY21 Workplan and Budget submission by the local Motel Fund Administrator(s).</p>



MAY	
<p>Provide 1:1 and group technical assistance to Motel Fund Administrators on operational plans, including peer support and sharing.</p> <p>Review workplans and budgets. Negotiate final awards.</p>	<p>Establish ongoing planning process for local emergency housing/shelter.</p> <p>Motel Fund Administrators finalize operational plans.</p> <p>Local outreach to public and consumers on changes in emergency housing access.</p>

4) Contact Information

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Office of Economic Opportunity

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