

Memorandum

To: Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs; House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs
From: Ken Schatz
Date: April 30, 2020
Subject: COVID Recovery Motel Transition Timing

As Vermont begins an initial phase of COVID Recovery, the Department for Children and Families (DCF) and the Agency of Human Services (AHS) have turned to the task of decreasing the number of Vermonters in motels for emergency housing – currently over 1300 households – in a responsible way. We want to assure our community partners, the Legislature, and the public that May 15, 2020 is not a hard stop when guests in motels are turned out onto the streets. We are planning a phased approach to achieve positive outcomes in stable housing for the families and individuals currently being served.

- DCF has no plans to cease housing vulnerable Vermonters on May 15.
- DCF plans to continue using motels for emergency housing past May 15 and increasing attention on connecting clients to appropriate supports and services.
- Stable, safe housing is an important health strategy that includes reducing congregate housing to accommodate physical distancing and working diligently to transition Vermonters in motels to more stable, permanent housing.
- A phased approach to reducing the numbers of Vermonters in emergency motels is necessary to continue slowing the spread of COVID-19 and in recognizing the stress and anxiety produced by living in a time of global pandemic – particularly for people with housing crises and who may have complex trauma and medical histories.
- DCF commits to giving partners and clients ample notice of any changes to emergency housing policies or delivery over the coming months.

DCF and AHS are diligently and expeditiously working on a plan to transition away from the widescale use of motels. We look forward to discussing the plan with stakeholders and working to help move as many people as possible into permanent housing. An intentional transition from the current crisis response will provide greater capacity going forward to ensure homelessness is rare, brief, and nonrecurring.

