

Memorandum

To: House General, Housing, & Military Affairs; House Human Services; House Appropriations; Senate Economic Development, Housing & General Affairs; Senate Health & Welfare; Senate Appropriations

CC: Chittenden County Homeless Alliance, Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness

From: Ken Schatz

Date: May 26, 2020

Subject: Changes to COVID-19 Motel Voucher Program assistance effective June 1, 2020

In response to Governor Scott's declaration of emergency to slow the spread of COVID-19, the Department for Children and Families (DCF) Economic Services Division (ESD) relaxed the General Assistance Emergency Housing rules, suspended the Period of Ineligibility (POI), and began housing Vermonters who were homeless in motels/hotel/similar spaces, when shelter space was not available or when the shelter was unable to accommodate its guests while following the emerging guidance produced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Vermont Department of Health (VDH).

As Vermont begins to reopen, the General Assistance Program will continue housing Vermonters experiencing homelessness. However, DCF will begin shifting significantly to a recovery response focused on transitioning people out of motels and into more stable housing. This will include providing additional supports for clients and community partners as well as phasing in more structure for the motel voucher program operating currently.

Beginning June 1, 2020:

- DCF will continue working to increase the amount of housing navigation and support services available to allow community partners the resources necessary to help the large numbers of Vermonters currently in emergency housing.
- ESD will begin requiring clients to engage and work with their local Coordinated Entry (CE) partners to work on a permanent housing plan to continue to receive temporary housing.
- ESD will reinstitute a graduated POI for any household asked to leave a motel/hotel/shelter/similar establishment for not following its rules. This will be for a modified duration of the existing Period of Ineligibility.





Beginning June 15, 2020 ESD will require households with monthly income over the Reach Up standard to make a 30% contribution toward their housing needs based on the calculation in the GA rule 2652.4.

More detailed information regarding these changes will be released over the next week. In the meantime, rest assured the Department is focused on keeping vulnerable Vermonters safe and identifying how best to support them going forward during this time of upheaval and stress.

