

**AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES (AHS)  
DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
SFY 2021 FAMILY SUPPORTIVE HOUSING EXPANSION**

## **ENDING FAMILY HOMELESSNESS**

Ending homelessness is one of the four priorities of the Governor's Strategic Budgeting Plan. The Agency of Human Services has adopted and is implementing the national framework to [\*End Family Homelessness\*](#). Ending homelessness occurs when the experience of homelessness in Vermont is rare and brief and non-recurring. The long-term impact of housing instability on child development is well-documented. When we end family homelessness, no family will be without shelter, and those in shelter will be quickly connected to permanent housing with appropriate services to promote whole family well-being, economic security and housing stability.

To date, the Department for Children and Families efforts to End Family Homelessness include:

- The Child Development Division issued an Early Learning & Care Resource Guide for Families Experiencing Homelessness and DCF's Child Development Division and Office of Economic Opportunity hosted a webinar training on [\*Early Childhood & Homelessness\*](#).
- Funding and leadership to support the Homeless Continuums of Care implementation of Coordinated Entry which connects families experiencing housing crisis with housing help.
- Improving the process and prioritization for Family Unification Vouchers through DCF and the Vermont State Housing Authority.

By far, the largest initiative to *End Family Homelessness* has been to expand Family Supportive Housing.

## **ABOUT FAMILY SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**

Family Supportive Housing helps families experiencing homelessness move into permanent affordable housing and provides intensive home-based case management and service coordination to help families keep their housing. Family Supportive Housing is administered by the DCF Office of Economic Opportunity and delivered through community-based organizations at multiple sites across the state through a combination of Medicaid (GC) and general fund.

Family Supportive Housing is a nationally recognized, evidenced-based practice for promoting housing stability for families with complex, high needs. Service Coordinators support 12-15 families at a time. The program currently serves 7 (of 12) AHS districts with a statewide average caseload of 132 families with children.

Family Supportive Housing (FSH) is prioritized families with child welfare involvement, young children and multiple episodes of homelessness. FSH enrolls families through the statewide coordinated entry system and uses the statewide homeless management information system to ensure effective targeting of public resources. Family Supportive Housing sites help families stay together in their home communities and find and afford housing by working closely with landlords and establishing Memoranda of Understanding with affordable housing providers. Families in the program receive housing subsidies from a variety of sources; Family Unification Vouchers through the Vermont State Housing Authority are a primary source for rental assistance.

FSH Service Coordinators support enrolled families for a duration of time that is appropriate for each family having the flexibility to continue necessary supports as appropriate, while the families maintain the same, stable housing arrangement. The program is designed to provide a minimum of two years of supportive housing, as Family Supportive Housing aims to reduce the incidence and duration of homelessness through support for families to transition to and sustain permanent housing over time. Service coordination and case management services focus on the root causes of a family's homelessness; promotes resiliency for parents and their children; and helps households build financial capability. Family Supportive Housing follows national guidelines, has been independently evaluated and uses evidence-based practices including supportive housing, permanent housing subsidies, Strengthening Families Framework, trauma-informed care, financial empowerment and multi-generational approaches.

Family Supportive Housing is a high quality, evidence-based program which served 210 families statewide in State Fiscal Year 2019. More information about the quality and impact of Family Supportive Housing can be found in the Annual Report:

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/OEO/Docs/FSH-AR-SFY2019.pdf>

## **EXPANDING FAMILY SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**

Since its inception in 2014, Family Supportive Housing has grown from 3 AHS Districts with the capacity to serve 90 families, to 7 current sites serving up to 147 families at any given time. The DCF Office of Economic Opportunity has a dedicated .8 FTE position to support the program. In SFY2021, DCF has proposed that Vermont expand Family Supportive Housing to 3 additional AHS Districts (10 total) and expand capacity in current districts with high needs. Family Supportive Housing expansion will add capacity to assist approximately 110 additional families statewide.

FSH expansion has been recommended by several statewide councils and reports:

- Opioid Coordinating Council included FSH expansion of a core recommendation in order to stabilize families and reduce health and healthcare costs associated with opioid use and homelessness.
- Included as a recommendation by the Legislative Advisory Council on Child Poverty and Strengthening Families.
- Recommended for expansion in the SFY2019 Legislative Report on Specialized Housing Vouchers.

The Vermont State Housing Authority, in partnership with DCF, has applied for additional Family Unification Vouchers (FUP). If additional FUP vouchers are awarded by the federal government, expanding Family Supportive Housing will support the utilization of these additional specialized housing vouchers. DCF will continue to work closely with VSHA to align and coordinate Family Supportive Housing and the FUP voucher program.

Existing Family Supportive Housing Sites to Expand (by AHS District): Hartford, Burlington, Bennington, Barre, St. Johnsbury.

New Family Supportive Housing sites will be based on a review of General Assistance emergency housing utilization, the homeless Point in Time Count and DCF family services caseload. The St. Albans District has already been identified as one of these sites. New FSH providers will be determined through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

The SFY2021 proposal is revenue neutral. DCF will reallocate \$288K from Independence Place<sup>1</sup>; those families will be able to be served through an expanded FSH program. There is up to \$200K in savings through the Vermont Rental Subsidy (VRS) program. The \$488,000 in savings offsets the GF increase needed to expand the FSH program to 10 districts. The table below demonstrates SFY21 Family Supportive Housing Expansion as net neutral. It is important to understand that the budget decreases in this proposal are dependent on the expansion of FSH in order to mitigate the impact to vulnerable families.

SFY21 FAMILY SUPPORTIVE HOUSING EXPANSION		General Fund	Medicaid GC
GA Dept ID	Vermont Rental Subsidy reduction	\$(200,000)	
Reach Up Dept ID	Independence Place Grant eliminated	\$(288,000)	
OEO Dept ID	Increase OEO Housing Program Officer position from 0.8 to 1 FTE	\$ 17,421	
OEO Dept ID	FSH Training & Technical Assistance Services	\$ 40,000	
OEO Dept ID	Family Supportive Housing expansion	\$ 430,579	
DCF Net-Neutral		\$ 0	

OEO Dept ID	Family Supportive Housing expansion GC conversion	\$(240,044)	\$ 526,297
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The table below shows the current FSH Program, with the proposed expansion, less related increases for administration at OEO.

	# of Districts Served	Average Caseload	General Fund	General Fund GC Conversion	Medicaid GC	Total
<b>Current FSH Program</b>	7	132	\$ 191,464		\$ 627,200	\$ 818,664
SFY 2021 Expansion (New)	10	110	\$ 470,579	(\$240,044)	\$ 526,297	\$ 756,832
<b>Proposed SFY 2021 FSH Program</b>	10	242	\$ 421,999		\$ 1,153,497	\$ 1,575,496

The SFY 2021 Family Supportive Housing Expansion also includes \$17,421 in additional funding to OEO to support an administrative staff increase from .8 FTE to 1 FTE, as shown below. With minimal staffing, additional training and technical assistance funds are central to statewide implementation for the program.

Family Supportive Housing SFY21 Expansion	General Fund	Medicaid GC
OEO Administration	\$ 17,421	
Training & Technical Assistance	\$ 40,000	
Family Supportive Housing Provider Billing & Grants	\$ 190,535	\$ 526,297

<sup>1</sup> A Memo was issued by DCF to the Joint Fiscal Office on the elimination of the Independence Place Grant.