

COVID-19 AHS Housing Recovery Plan - 6.20.2020

Guiding Principles

- This plan is a separate proposal from that put forth by ACCD. It is intended to work in coordination and collaboration with other proposals in order to address all three legs of the stool (services, rental assistance, housing stock)
- Effectively ends family homelessness (makes homelessness “rare, brief, and non-recurring”)
- Successful implementation of these strategies requires an Agency-wide approach
- Connect people on a path to permanent, safe housing as quickly as possible to reduce motel utilization
- Strategies use a combination of short-, medium-, and long-term approaches to housing recovery
- Includes allowable uses of CRF dollars while also leveraging existing agency resources to support long-term plan
- Meets each household’s specific service and housing needs including working to support the most complex households for those with and without children
- Uses evidence-based practices and employs a housing first strategy focused on permanent housing rather than increased use of shelters/motels

Budget Request = \$16,061,600 in CRF/FEMA

Activity	Estimate	CRF/FEMA/Other fed	ESG Federal	GF (existing budget)	Global Commitment (existing budget)
Family Housing Rental Assistance	2,500,000	1,250,000	750,000	500,000	
Housing Navigation/Case Management	6,000,000	5,000,000	1,000,000		
Rapid Resolution	3,780,000	3,780,000			
General Assistance (July-September)	5,781,600	5,781,600			
Expand Family Supportive Housing	756,832			230,535	526,297
Housing Risk Pool	250,000	250,000			
General Assistance (January - June, 2021)	4,000,000			4,000,000	
TOTAL	\$ 23,068,432	\$ 16,061,600	\$ 1,750,000	\$ 4,730,535	\$ 526,297

Short-Term Plan

Led by AHS-CO, DCF-ESD and OEO

1. GOAL: Rapidly Exit People from Motels to Safe Housing

- *Rapid exit and resolution strategies focused on reducing trauma, identifying and creating new pathways to housing, and empowering households to partner in their own housing plan.*
- Re institute structure to GA motel voucher program - \$5.8M CRF/FEMA
- Implement rapid resolution strategies focused on reducing trauma, identifying new pathways to housing, preserving scarce housing resources, and empowering households to partner in their own housing plan
- Provide one-time flexible, financial assistance of \$2,500-8,000 for 720 households - \$3.78M CRF
- Provide housing navigation services to all households in motels - \$5M CRF/\$1M ESG
- Expand service capacity for partners to complete housing assessments, support housing search and placement, develop individualized housing plans, and connect households to mainstream services and benefits
- Capitalize housing risk pool for landlords to encourage rentals - \$250K CRF

2. GOAL: Reinforce Emergency Shelter Network

- *Congregate emergency shelters need additional funding and technical public health assistance/supplies to re-open, relocate, and start accepting new guests.*
- Offer technical assistance and access to testing as well as maintain capacity to quarantine and isolate households with suspected or confirmed COVID

Short-Term Plan

AHS-CO, DCF-ESD and OEO in coordination with ACCD

3. GOAL: Align with Other Housing Proposals

- *Significant rental assistance is required to avoid massive eviction and new homelessness due to lost income.*
- New Rental Housing Stabilization Fund to provide up to 3 months of emergency rental assistance and rental arrearage payments to landlords.
- Increase availability of housing units for households in motels
- Vacancy rates across Vermont create a significant obstacle to locating an apartment, even when a household has services and rental assistance
- Capital funding to VHCB to make new 250 units available, and provide operating reserves to make deeply affordable units with services
- Provide rental rehabilitation grants and forgivable loans to make up to 250 units of housing available in the private rental market

Medium-Term Plan

*Led by AHS-CO, DCF-ESD and OEO with participation by DVHA, DCF, DMH, DAIL and DOC
and supported by Vermont State Housing Authority*

1. GOAL: End Family Homelessness by making it Rare, Brief, and Non-recurring

- *250 families are currently homeless in Vermont. Ending family homelessness has been a long-standing goal of the Agency of Human Services and is achievable in this moment.*
- Immediately provide every homeless family temporary rental assistance (1 year) to bridge to a public housing voucher - \$2.5M CRF/FEMA/ESG/GF
 - Expand Vermont Rental Subsidy and Use ESG CARES funds through the Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP)
- Expand Family Supportive Housing (FSH) - \$757K GF/GC
 - Move forward with planned expansion (pre-COVID) adding long-term services to help place and keep families with complex, high needs in permanent housing

Long-Term Plan

*Led by AHS-CO, DCF-ESD and OEO with participation by DVHA, DCF, DMH, DAIL and DOC
and supported by Vermont State Housing Authority*

1. GOAL: Expand Permanent Supportive Housing

- *Permanent Supportive Housing is one of the most cost effective, high impact interventions for single adults with multi-system involvement and/or chronic homelessness.*
- Work across the agency to analyze existing funds (AHS spends approximately \$29M on housing programs) and identify where resources can be redirected and access federal housing programs
- Explore leveraging Medicaid to fund Permanent Supportive Housing case management services
- Implement an integrated AHS Permanent Supportive Housing Initiative to support cost effective, high impact interventions for single adults with complex needs (mental health conditions, substance use, co-occurring conditions, Corrections involvement, etc.) and/or chronic homelessness

2. GOAL: Transition to a Community-Based Model of Emergency Housing Support

- *The motel voucher program provides for overflow capacity when no other emergency shelter bed is available but is a poor service delivery model with limited results. Community providers can provide both services and shelter, even in motels, and more effectively help Vermonters exit homelessness.*
- Shift from the GA motel voucher program as of July 2021 to the Emergency Housing transition as previously proposed.
- DCF has been in conversations with community organizations about this proposal since September 2019
- The Agency will continue to collaborate with organizations over the next 12 months building on prior conversations and to ensure the necessary supports to administer funds, budget for needs, ensure a minimum standard of care across regions, provide monitoring and oversight, technical assistance and training, etc.
- Invest in community providers working as part of the local Homeless Continua of Care Community providers can provide both services and shelter, even in motels, and more effectively help Vermonters exit homelessness.