

HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS DAY 2021

JANUARY 27TH, 2021



VERMONT'S HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC

WHAT WE LEARNED:

The pandemic made the hidden extent of housing instability in Vermont visible. People whose housing was precarious, who were couch surfing or doubled up with family or friends, could no longer sustain living situations that were already tenuous.

WHAT WE ACHIEVED:

Vermont created opportunities out of the pandemic with the federal CARES Act funding to keep people from losing their housing, strengthen the crisis response system, and increase housing availability.

WHAT WE DID:

Vermont kept highly vulnerable people experiencing homelessness safe. You can't "Stay Home, Stay Safe" if you don't have a home to stay in. The Vermont Department of Health reported in December that only six people experiencing homelessness have been diagnosed with COVID-19, with zero reported deaths.



photo credit: Stephen Marshall

HIGHLIGHTS:

In January 2020, 1,000 Vermonters were living in shelters, in hotels paid by the state or others, on the streets or in the woods, and in their cars or other places not meant for human habitation.

Despite an eviction moratorium, in the second week of December 2020, 2,512 Vermonters, including 386 Children were living in hotels because they had no home to safely stay in.

We kept people safe by:

Placing asymptomatic people living without a home in hotels through an expansion of the General Assistance Emergency Housing program – primarily with FEMA dollars.

By setting up isolation and recovery settings where people with symptoms and/or an exposure could safely isolate, be tested, connect with a primary care provider and other support services, and, if necessary, recover.

Countless communities, organizations and state agencies came together to provide food, support and coordinated care to those living in motels.

Results showed:

9381 renter households received back rent assistance to preserve their housing.

638 homeowner households received mortgage foreclosure assistance to preserve their housing.

247 new apartments were acquired and/or rehabbed to become permanently affordable housing for people experiencing homelessness.

218 apartments were renovated and made available to homeless Vermonters at or below Fair Market Rent (40% of the recent median rent in the local area).

327 households received rental assistance to help them move out of homelessness and into housing.

12 emergency shelters are now safer and more pandemic-resistant, and comply with CDC guidelines.



photo credit: Stephen Marshall

For more action items, please see the 2021 Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition / Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness Legislative Priorities [here](#).

WHAT NOW?

Deploy new federal Emergency Rental Assistance rapidly and Continue Support for 3 Critical Components of Affordable Housing:

Capital investments to create more permanently affordable housing: *Fully fund the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board at the full statutory amount.*

Housing-related financial assistance to help at-risk Vermonters keep their housing and to fill the affordability gap for low-wage working families or those living on fixed incomes: *Increase annual funding for the Vermont Rental Subsidy and the Department of Mental Health's Subsidy+Care programs to \$2 million each.*

Supportive services for those with the greatest challenges to finding and maintaining housing: *Expand Medicaid funding as a stable funding source for tenancy supports.*

