

# Emergency Housing Update

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Interim DCF Commissioner, Dr. Harry Chen

November 2022



**DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**  
**Agency of Human Services**

# What does “homeless” mean?

## *Category 1: Literal Homelessness*

- Unsheltered (*place not meant for human habitation*)
- Staying in an emergency shelter, including domestic violence (DV) shelters
- Staying in an emergency apartment (for families)
- Staying in a host home (for unaccompanied minors)
- Staying in transitional housing designated for the homeless (e.g., Veterans Place in Northfield)
- Staying in a motel paid for by a community partner (e.g., DV agency)
- In the General Assistance Emergency Housing program – aka receiving a “motel voucher”
- In the DCF Transitional Housing Program

# Current Capacity

## General Assistance Emergency Housing (“motel voucher”) program

103 Households - 126 adults, 74 children

- Provides emergency housing in a hotel/motel when no alternative shelter is available
- Eligibility/access through Economic Services or 2-1-1 (after hours)
  - “Catastrophic” or “Vulnerable”, up to 28 or 84 days depending on eligibility
- Adverse Weather Conditions:

Between December 15, 2022 - March 15, 2023:

Expanded eligibility will be in place regardless of the forecasted weather.

From November 15 - December 15, 2022 and March 15 - April 15, 2023:

When the following conditions are met or anticipated — for at least three hours, between the hours of 6PM and 6AM:

1. Temperatures or wind chill are less than 20 degrees (F); or
2. Temperatures are ≤ 32 degrees (F) with a ≥ 50% projected chance of precipitation.

# Current Capacity, cont.

## **DCF Transitional Housing Program**

1,493 households – 1,813 adults, 511 children

- No new applications (as of 10/1)
- Participants have an occupancy agreement with a participating lodging establishment
- Participants recertify eligibility every 90 days and must be participating in coordinated entry
- Up to 18 months, but limited by funding and anticipated to end March 2023

# Current Capacity, cont.

## **Emergency Shelter Network**

30 emergency shelters, 23 emergency apartments, DV motel overflow

524 household capacity (only 22 seasonal)

### **Shelter Preservation/Expansion in Past 2 Years:**

- Significant investments to increase staffing capacity and raise wages to retain staff (including to expand sites to 24/7)
- Supported shelter renovations (SFY22, SFY23 – 3 sites)
- Two seasonal shelters to come online this winter, and now funding an another shelter
- New shelter project at Elmwood (Burlington)
- Expanded # of emergency apartments in three areas (used by families)
- Expanded DV Shelter capacity

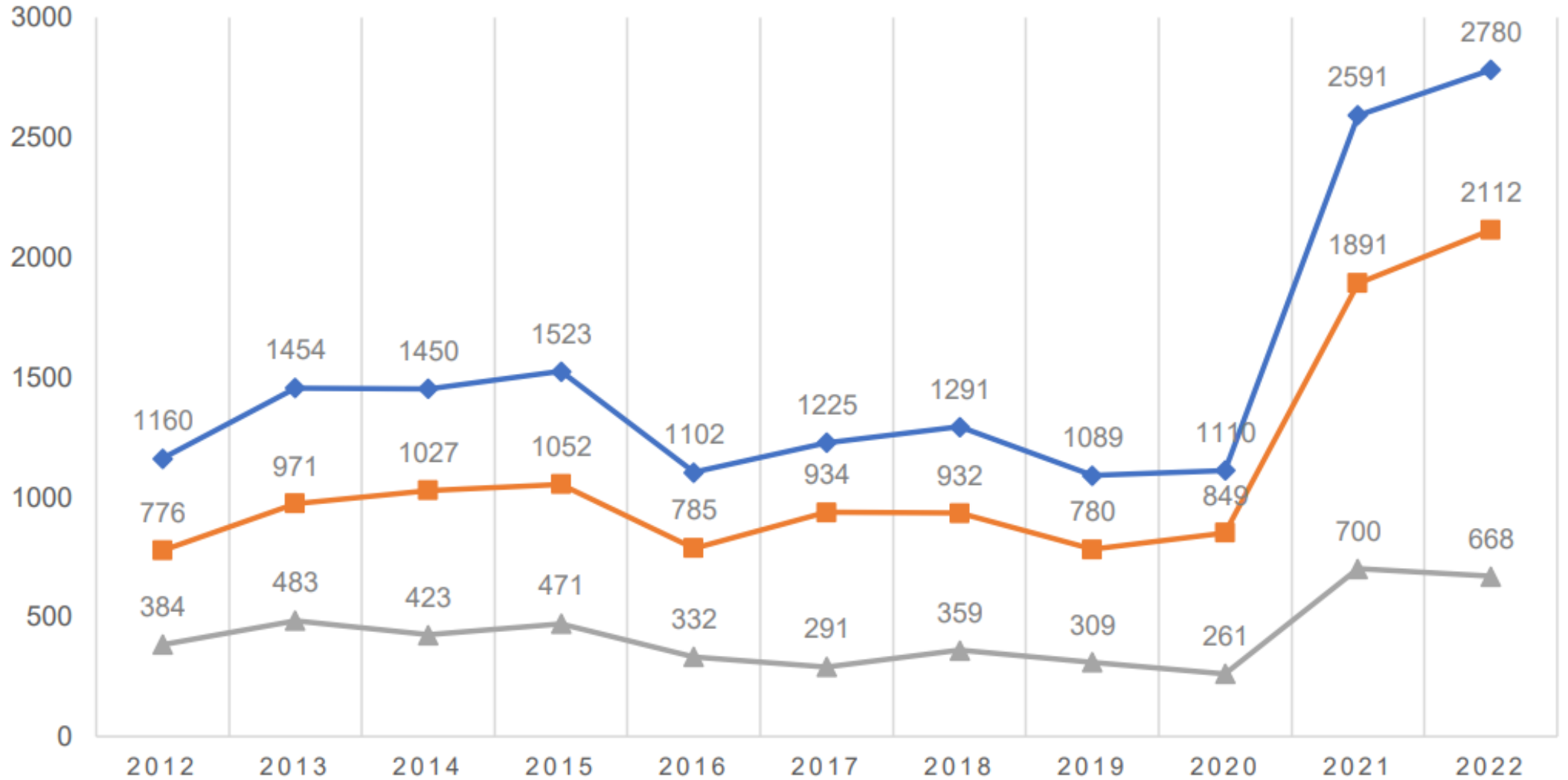
# How many people are experiencing homelessness in Vermont?

Program	Households
<b>DCF Transitional Housing Program</b> (occupancy agreements or provisionally housed)	1,493  (1813 adults and 511 children)
<b>GA Emergency Housing</b>	103  (126 adults and 74 children)
<b>Emergency Shelter/Emergency Apartments</b> (including motels through Domestic Violence Shelters)	Approx 500
<b>Unsheltered (estimate based on local unofficial counts)</b>	At least 150

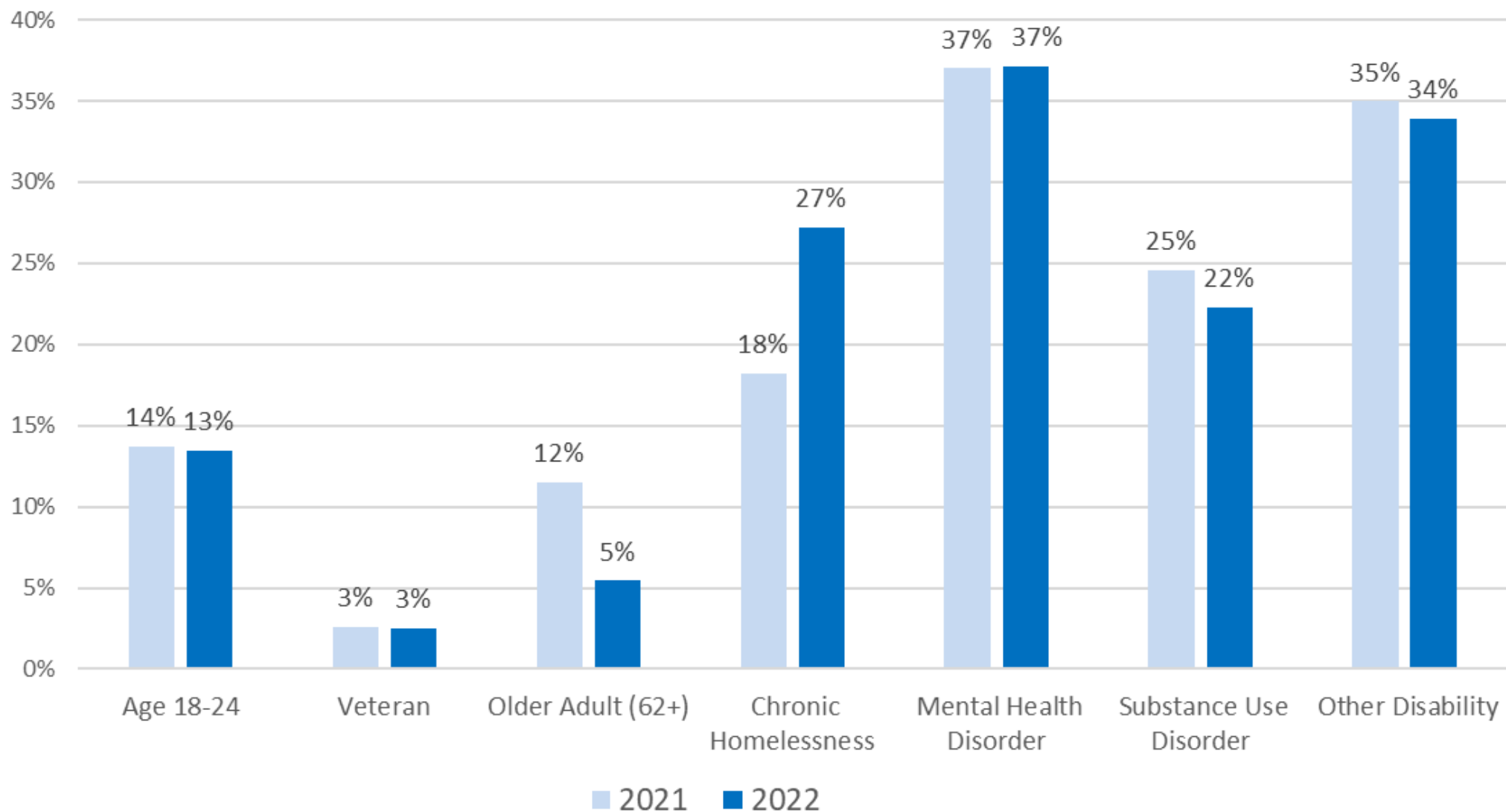
# TOTAL PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Statewide BoS CoC CCHA CoC

\*BoS: Balance of State Continuum of Care; CCHA: Chittenden County Homeless Alliance



## Characteristics of Adults Served by Emergency Shelters





# Coordinated Entry – System-wide Homeless Data

## State Fiscal Year 2022:

4,302 households experienced or at imminent risk of homelessness  
(excludes DV agencies)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Average Length of Time People Experience Homelessness</b>
2018	79 days
2019	54 days
2020	No data
2021	152 days
2022	In process, current estimate 252 days

# COVID-era Investments to Address Homelessness

Supplemental Funding for Shelters (CRF, GF) for COVID related needs, for expansion of hours/staffing, etc.

Capital Funds for Shelter Improvement, Expansion (CRF, ARPA, GF)

Capital Funds for New Permanent Housing, some dedicated to re-house homeless (CRF, ARPA, GF, CDBG-CV)

Expansion of GA Emergency Housing to provide non-congregate shelter (FEMA)

Temporary Transitional Housing Program to provide stability to households continuing in motels (ERAP)

Expansion of Motel-based Services, including Housing Navigation Services (CRF, FEMA, ERAP, GF)

Rental & Utility Assistance/Arrears for low-income Vermonters (CRF, ERAP)

Expansion of Family Supportive Housing (Medicaid, GF)

Court-based eviction prevention (ERAP)

Expanded housing support services (navigation, application, retention, legal services) (ERAP)

Rehab offline private-market units, designated to re-house homeless (CRF, ARPA)

Health and Safety Repairs support for landlords (ERAP)

Flexible financial assistance for households at-risk/homeless (CRF, GF)

One-time payments to support transition out of motels (CRF)

Rapid Re-housing rental assistance and services for households who are homeless (ESG-CV, CRF)

# Successes

- 2,806 households have exited homelessness since April 2020
- Local collaboration and coordination
  - *Homeless Health Care Capacity Building Projects*
  - *Coordinated Entry*
- Enhanced Support at Hotels and Motels
  - *AHS Care Coordination Transitional Housing Resource Teams*
- Statewide collaboration and coordination
  - *Across state government, and with community partners*
- Major increase in housing retention services and rental assistance

# Housing Recovery Highlights (DCF)

**Rapid Resolution Housing Initiative** – Flexible funds to help households quickly exit motels into safe housing

- Summer 2020 – June 2022
- 1,151 households assisted
- Examples: debt relief (when a barrier to housing), transportation, move-in costs, security deposits

**CARES Housing Voucher – Rapid Re-housing for Homeless Families**

- Ended July 2022
- 272 homeless households were re-housed with a temporary voucher, which transitioned to a permanent voucher

# Strategies to Create/Expand Access to Units

- **Landlord Relief Program** - statewide rental risk mitigation fund -- launching January 2023
- [Vermont Housing Improvement Program](#) – Up to \$50,000 per unit for repairs to bring vacant rental units up to code or add new ADUs. 20% match required, maintain FMR prices, fill units through coordinated entry
- **Landlord Liaisons (ERAP, HOP-GF)** – Positions based in communities and working to support landlord outreach and engagement
- [Landlord-Tenant Mediation Program](#) (ERAP) – Supported by Landlords Association, provides formal landlord-tenant mediation to avoid court eviction
- **VHCB** grants and loans for affordable housing - \$119m ARPA, \$32m CRF, and Supplemental GF (>\$100m)

# ERAP-Funded Vermont Programs (>\$300m)

Emergency Rental Assistance Program - *HOUSING STABILIZATION FOCUS*

- VERAP Rental Assistance (no new applications)
  - Assistance reduced to 50% of rent
  - Ends 11/30/22 for households 31-80% of AMI
- VERAP Health & Safety Repairs (no new applications)
- VERAP Rent into Court (11/30)
- VERAP Money to Move (11/30)
- VERAP-U and REAP (12/31/22)

**VERAP has served 16,496 households with \$151m (and counting)**

- Reach Up Emergency Rental Assistance (6/30/23)
- Housing Stability Services (June 2024)
- DCF Transitional Housing Program (no new applications, 3/31/23)

# New Resources, Solutions & Progress



*Nearly 2,100 new affordable housing units created and/or preserved to-date.* Approximately 1/3 of these units have been set-aside for those experiencing homelessness.



An additional 1,900 units of affordable and middle-income housing is expected to be created with the remaining “recovery funding”.

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With the additional Covid Recovery funding committed to build affordable housing over the last year, *we have more than tripled the affordable housing production* compared to the average of the preceding 5 years.



Collectively, we helped more than *2,806 households exit homelessness into permanent housing*, many with subsidies and services.

# Community Engagement Meetings

DCF engaged in hosting meetings in every region of the state to receive feedback from housing and service providers on the short-term ERA funding, and the winddown of the federal funding.

- 14 meetings (12 local and 2 statewide)
- 96 community organizations, along with AHS district staff
- More than 300 attendees

[Link to Summary](#)



# Community Engagement: Priorities for Extending ERAP-funded Projects

VERAP Rental Assistance for Extremely Low-Income Households	7.11
Housing Stability Services - 3rd year (July 2024-June 2025)	5.30
Utilities - REAP or VERAP-U	4.90
DCF Transitional Housing Program	4.83
VERAP Money to Move (for Extremely Low-Income Households)	4.74
Reach Up Emergency Rental Assistance	4.63
VERAP Health & Safety Repairs	3.92
VERAP Rent into Court	2.80
Other	1.20

# Community Engagement: “Top Five” Possible Next Steps

GA Adverse Weather Conditions - Set season instead of night by night	58.2%
Launch new Permanent Supportive Housing Program for those with the most severe service needs	52.8%
Shallow subsidy (rental assistance) for extremely low-income Vermonters (<30% AMI)	47.3%
Expand community-operated semi/non-congregate shelter capacity	40.8%
Expand community-operated congregate shelter capacity	37.7%
Expand Family Supportive Housing	37.1%
Provide a Rapid Re-housing Voucher for All Homeless Families	34.2%

# Themes from Conversations

- Understanding and significant anxiety around the end of federal funding
- Need for Units and Rental Assistance, especially for ELI households (<30% AMI)
- Zoning and permitting barriers to shelter and housing
- Concerns about large increases in rents, no-cause evictions
- Insufficient services to meet the needs for: mental health, substance use disorder, public safety
- Universal housing application, support for homeownership options for those with low incomes, shallow subsidies

# Proposal for Additional ERAP Funding

Reconciliation between ERA1 and ERA2 is expected to produce between \$30,000,000 and \$37,000,000. On November 9, AoA presented the following plan ([Memo linked here](#))

1. \$5,000,000 to DCF and DHCD to restore the total spending for housing stability services to \$15,200,000, enabling three years of grants to community partners.
2. \$12,600,000 to AHS to bring the total investment to \$48,600,000 to assist homeless individuals, those exiting homelessness, and implement other such programming as becomes allowable under federal guidance.
3. \$6,400,000 to the Vermont Emergency Rental Assistance Program (VERAP) administered by the Vermont State Housing Authority to extend the rental benefit to the 30% area median income (AMI) population for April, May, and June at a rate of 50% of household rent.
4. \$2,200,000 to the Vermont Emergency Rental Assistance Program - Utilities (VERAP-U) administered by the Public Service Department to extend the VERAP-U program from December 31 to June 30 with the same criteria as the VERAP program.
5. Any additional funding which becomes available, currently estimated at \$10,000,000, would be invested in medium and long-term affordable housing investments.