
**Report to
The Vermont Legislature**

**Emergency Housing Transition
H.171**

In Accordance with Act 81 (2023)

Submitted to:

**House Committee on Appropriations
House Committee on General and Housing
House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs
House Committee on Human Services
Joint Fiscal Committee
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Economic Development,
Housing and General Affairs
Senate Committee on Health and Welfare**

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Report Date:

April 1, 2024



Legislative Charge

This report is being submitted in accordance with the Act 81 and resolves the requirement for the Department for Children and Families (DCF) to submit a report to House Committee on Appropriations, House Committee on General and Housing, House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs, House Committee on Human Services, Joint Fiscal Committee, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs and Senate Committee on Health and Welfare containing the number of households that were not successfully transitioned out of the pandemic-era General Assistance Emergency Housing Program into alternative housing placements and the reason why each such household was not successfully placed.

Executive Summary

The General Assistance Emergency Housing program currently offers housing support in three different categories: June Cohort, Categorically Eligible, and Adverse Weather Condition (AWC). In total, as of March 18, 2024, there were 1,539 households receiving assistance. Households are encouraged to work with Coordinated Entry (a federally established and locally implemented system to assess needs and connect people to resources), however, failure in doing so does not exclude them from housing assistance. In February 2024, 256 households (483 individuals) enrolled in Coordinated Entry and 216 households (401 individuals) exited – demonstrating a continued trend of more people entering homelessness than exiting. As of the end of the month, 2,752 households (4,594 individuals) remained in Coordinated Entry. DCF has collected additional data from households eligible under the June Cohort category, and even in that group, most of the households have declined to share their plans upon exiting the program. From the 804 households that exited since July 1, 2023, 284 households reported finding alternative housing. Pressure in the homelessness system of care continues to build due to the lack of affordable housing in the State of Vermont.

Background Information

Approved by the Legislature, the Pandemic-era General Assistance Emergency Housing Program assisted a special group of households which allowed them to maintain eligibility for housing assistance, when otherwise their eligibility would have ended. The criteria for eligibility included those who were age 60 or older, disabled and in receipt of SSI/SSDI benefits, were a domestic violence survivor, families with children, those who were evicted due to their residence being in health code violations, those who lost their residence due to natural disasters, and those who were pregnant. This program's end date has been extended from April 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024. The legislative monthly report (Act 81) focusing specifically on this group of households will end as of April 1, 2024. This group is often referred to as the June Cohort.

In addition to the June Cohort group, the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program also supports households who meet the program's Catastrophic or Vulnerable categories. Those who met the Catastrophic category were eligible for 84 days of housing assistance prior to March 13, 2024. And those who met the Vulnerable categories were eligible for 28 days of

housing assistance prior to March 13, 2024. Since then, the Budget Adjustment Act (BAA) waived the maximum number of nights a household is eligible and allows these households to continue to receive assistance through June 30, 2024. This program is often referred to as Categorically Eligible.

Lastly, the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program also offered housing assistance during AWC to those who did not meet any other eligibility criteria or had exhausted their maximum number of nights under categorical eligibility. AWC rules stated that between November 15 through December 15 and March 15 through April 15, DCF would determine eligibility on a day-to-day basis, dependent upon the weather forecast in each office area region. The criteria for eligibility was:

- Temperatures (or wind chill) must be forecast to dip below 20 degrees Fahrenheit or,
- Temperatures must be forecast to dip below 32 degrees and there must be a greater than 50% chance of precipitation.
- Either condition must be forecast to be met for at least three hours within the hours of 6 p.m. and 6 a.m., based on the town in which DCF’s local district office is located.

Between December 15 and March 15, eligibility was not weather dependent.

As of March 13, 2024, per the approved BAA, households eligible under the AWC who are not otherwise categorically eligible may provide a completed Medical Variance Form which allows a qualified health care provider to document a member of the household has a qualifying disability or health condition and maintain housing eligibility through June 30, 2024.

Number of Participants

On July 1, 2023, there were 1,289 households receiving housing assistance because they met the June Cohort criteria. As of March 18, 2023, the number of June Cohort households receiving housing assistance has decreased to 487 households, meaning that 804 households transitioned out of the program. 145 households who exited at some point during their eligibility have now returned to the General Assistance Emergency Assistance program.

As of March 18, 2024, there were 990 households meeting Categorical Eligibility. 138 of these households met the conditions due to the newly introduced Medical Variance Form which allows a qualified health care provider to document a member of the household has a qualifying disability or health condition.

As of March 18, 2024, there were 64 households meeting AWC because of the cold weather days.

The table below shows the number of households receiving housing assistance in each District Office area:

District Office	Total Eligible Households	Cohort Households*	Categorically Eligible***	AWC**
Barre District Office	179	65	107	7

District Office	Total Eligible Households	Cohort Households*	Categorically Eligible***	AWC**
Bennington District Office	166	68	89	9
Brattleboro District Office	197	57	131	9
Burlington District Office	275	78	176	21
Hartford District Office	73	35	36	2
Middlebury District Office	19	6	13	0
Morrisville District Office	27	9	17	1
Newport District Office	22	5	14	3
Rutland District Office	413	123	289	1
Springfield District Office	52	20	32	0
St Albans District Office	66	14	50	2
St Johnsbury District Office	50	7	36	7
Total	1539	487	990	62

Data notes: *Households in the cohort are eligible through 6/30/2024. **Households housed through AWC are eligible through 3/15/24. After 3/15, these households may become categorically eligible until 6/30/24 if they meet categorically eligibility requirements or are otherwise approved by the Economic Services Division (ESD). ***Households categorically eligible are eligible through 6/30/24.

The table below shows the eligibility categories for all households receiving housing assistance:

Eligibility Category	Total Eligible Households	Eligible Cohort Households	Eligible Non-Cohort Households
Age 60+	109	36	73
Death of a Spouse or Minor Child	5	0	5
Disabled (SSI/SSDI)	632	277	355
Domestic Violence	108	20	88
Families with Children	317	103	214
Health Code Violations/Eviction	139	43	96
Natural Disaster (Fire, Flood, Hurricane)	21	3	18
Pregnant	6	5	1
BAA 2024 Expanded Category	138	0	138
AWC	64	0	64
Total	1539	487	1052

Of note, because more households were able to remain housed in motels, there is limited capacity for when AWC is called in certain parts of the state. The same is true for those new to needing General Assistance Emergency Housing, people will be turned away because of limited capacity.

Coordinated Entry

The Coordinated Entry system is designed to streamline access to housing support and resources for Vermonters experiencing homelessness. Once a household completes the assessment and is found eligible, they are referred for housing case management. The household is ranked on a list among other households experiencing homelessness. The list is reviewed by housing agencies and resources are offered to those ranked highest.

In February 2024, 256 households (483 individuals) enrolled in Coordinated Entry and 216 households (401 individuals) exited. All households who are experiencing housing insecurities may have their information in Coordinated Entry, including those who are not receiving services from the ESD's General Assistance Emergency Housing Program. These households might be served by a Domestic Violence Agency, none State Funded shelter or are unsheltered. In February 2024, 2,752 households (4,594 individuals) remained in Coordinated Entry and in total, throughout the month, 2,968 households were served. Below is a chart from the Coordinated Entry Dashboard with data from the month of February 2024. Please note, this includes data from individuals not served by General Assistance Emergency Housing and is displayed by individuals instead of household.

Data on Coordinated Entry can be found at the following dashboard: [Vermont Coordinated Entry Dashboard — Institute for Community Alliances \(icalliances.org\)](https://icalliances.org/vermont-coordinated-entry-dashboard)

February 2024 Coordinated Entry Exit Destination Categories



In February 2024, of those who exited Coordinated Entry: 192 individuals exited and did not share their housing plans, 185 households exited to permanent housing, 10 households were institutionalized, 7 households found temporary housing, and 7 households were homeless. While this data only captures one month of exiting reasons, it is often similar to other months. The housing shortage in Vermont leads to a rotation for those seeking housing stability. When households exit into permanent housing, it often means that new households will be seeking housing services assistance; therefore, the overall number of households seeking assistance does not decrease.

Program Exit Reasons

The General Assistance Emergency Housing Program manually collects exit reasons for the June Cohort group from those households that are willing to provide the information. Households who receive assistance under Categorical Eligibility or AWC and exit the program do not have to share what their housing plans are upon leaving.

DCF found four major reasons for exiting the June Cohort. As of March 18, 2024, 284 households found housing (which includes housing in an apartment or other housing, housed by another Agency or admitted to hospital or treatment facility), 334 households did not renew and exited the program without further communications with the Department, 5 households joined another household, and 181 households exited in unfortunate circumstances or program participation refusal (including client death, exited from motel for misconduct, incarcerated, moved out of state, refused a shelter bed, refused to pay for self-pay nights or would not engage in case management and/or coordinated entry). 145 households who exited at some point during their eligibility have now returned to the normal General Assistance Emergency Assistance program.

Detailed exit reasons are shown in the table below:

Exit Reason	# of Households
Found Housing	284
Admitted to hospital/Treatment Facility	15
Apartment	213
Housing other than Apartment	53
Housed by another agency	3
No Renewal	334
Joined Another Household	5
Left the Cohort	181
Client Died	17
Exited by motel for misconduct	52
Incarcerated	4
Moved Out of State	15
Refused Shelter Bed	15
Not willing to pay for self-pay nights	4
Not engaged with case management/coordinated entry	74
TOTAL	804
# of Households that exited cohort and are currently back in hotels	145

Summary

Vermont is ranked number two in the nation for the number of homeless individuals per capita. DCF believes that this is due to the lack of affordable housing units available in the State and a more accurate accounting given the number of households still being housed in motel rooms – something that is unique to Vermont as most other states ended their pandemic-era hotel programs.

As of March 18, 2024, there are 1,539 households receiving housing assistance from the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program. When AWC are met, the program could house over 1,700 households. This means that households are competing for the same resources and housing units as not enough are available for everyone.