

Brattleboro Reformer

Brattleboro Reformer: SASH Brings Wellness-Based Support to the Doorstep

BRATTLEBORO — Support and Services at Home for All is making headway in the Brattleboro area, where several non-profit housing communities are testing the concept.

This federally funded pilot initiative is bringing SASH programs and resources to families and individuals living in affordable housing.

Funding for SASH for All was secured by U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders as part of the fiscal 2022 federal budget. The program is being piloted in several affordable-housing communities in Brattleboro, Guilford and Putney in collaboration with Brattleboro Housing Partnerships and the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust, both of which have long operated traditional SASH in their senior housing communities.

While “traditional” SASH is available to Medicare recipients who are older adults and people with disabilities, SASH for All targets low-income residents of all ages and abilities. These individuals are at risk of adverse health outcomes as they struggle to pay their bills on time, live their lives free from hunger, access health care, provide their children with quality before- and after-school care, and continue their education, and employment.

SASH for All is an entirely free and voluntary program. The goal is to provide a broad and flexible spectrum of support and resources within the home to empower participants to achieve goals they have set for themselves.

This year the program has been piloted in nine affordable-housing communities in Brattleboro in collaboration with Brattleboro Housing Partnerships and the Windham & Windsor Housing Trust.

The housing-based SASH staff works with individuals and their families to assess their health and wellness needs, connect them with resources and help them meet self-defined goals. Families struggling with financial security, well-being, and social connections receive special focus.

“The Housing Trust has been in the planning phase with Cathedral Square, Evernorth and Brattleboro Housing Partnerships for the past year and a half so it’s really exciting that we are now offering SASH for All services to younger adults and families,” Elizabeth Bridgewater, executive director of the Housing Trust, said in a statement. “We know from our experience with the traditional SASH model that bringing wellness-based support to someone’s doorstep has a measurable impact in their lives. This kind of support is desperately needed for younger households, particularly as the stresses associated with COVID continue to be felt throughout the community.”

“Brattleboro Housing Partnerships like Windham and Windsor Housing Trust understands that building relationships and connections are the foundation of housing retention. The SASH For All team is working exceptionally hard to develop the expansion of this innovative program based on participant needs and feedback,” said Shares Christine Hazzard, executive director at Brattleboro Housing Partnerships. “At a time when so many are facing unprecedented challenges, we are incredibly grateful to the SASH For All team and residents for pioneering this much-needed program.”

SASH for All participants receive a number of services, including:

- In-person visits with the staff and a comprehensive health and wellness assessment updated yearly;
- A team-based and person-centered approach to help participants meet their self-identified goals;
- One-on-one support and regular access to health promotion and prevention-based programs;
- A personalized or family, or both, Healthy Living Plan, based on the self-identified goals;
- Access to events as part of their local Community Healthy Living Plan, including community meals, educational programs, workshops, exercise classes, and more;

- Regular check-ins and support from their SASH coordinator, wellness nurse, and peer support specialist;
- Referrals and information on services and resources available within the community;
- An informed team to help in a crisis or special time of need; and;
- Support in life transitions.

In accordance with the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families model, SASH for All is using metrics in six categories to measure progress and impact:

- **Social Connections:** Youth and adults will have a say in improving their community and be socially engaged in positive relationships.
- **Health & Wellness:** Adults and children will be connected to a primary care provider and access prevention-based programs in their home communities.
- **Food Access & Security:** Residents will be relieved from the stress of not having enough food.
- **Transportation:** Transportation challenges will be identified and remedied.
- **Housing Stability & Economic Wellness:** Residents will create financial breathing room and housing stability.
- **Education & Childcare:** Adults will be prepared to pursue their educational aspirations while participating in their children's educational journey.

With positive outcomes as measured by these metrics, officials say the potential exists to spread SASH to more than 10,000 affordable, multifamily rental units in Vermont.

Written

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4 min read