

1 Sec. E.321 GENERAL ASSISTANCE EMERGENCY HOUSING

2 (a) To the extent emergency housing is available and within the funds
3 appropriated, the Commissioner for Children and Families shall ensure that
4 General Assistance Emergency Housing is provided in fiscal year 2026 to
5 households that attest to lack of a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime
6 residence and have a member who:

7 (1) is 65 years of age or older;

8 (2) has a disability that can be documented by:

9 (A) receipt of Supplemental Security Income or Social Security
10 Disability Insurance; or

11 (B) a form developed by the Department as a means of documenting
12 a qualifying disability or health condition that requires:

13 (i) the applicant's name, date of birth, and the last four digits of
14 the applicant's Social Security number or other identifying number;

15 (ii) a description of the applicant's disability or health condition;

16 (iii) a description of the risk posed to the applicant's health, safety,
17 or welfare if temporary emergency housing is not authorized pursuant to this
18 section; and

19 (iv) a certification of a health care provider, as defined in 18
20 V.S.A. § 9481, that includes the provider's credentials, credential number,
21 address, and phone number;

22 (3) is a child 19 years of age or under;

23 (4) is pregnant;

1 (5) has experienced the death of a spouse, domestic partner, or minor
2 child that caused the household to lose its housing;

3 (6) has experienced a natural disaster, such as a flood, fire, or hurricane;

4 (7) is under a court-ordered eviction or constructive eviction due to
5 circumstances over which the household has no control; or

6 (8) is experiencing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault,
7 stalking, human trafficking, hate violence, or other dangerous or life-
8 threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a
9 household member that caused the household to lose its housing.

10 (b)(1) General Assistance Emergency Housing shall be provided in a
11 community-based shelter whenever possible. If there is inadequate
12 community-based shelter space available within the Agency of Human
13 Services district in which the household presents itself, the household shall be
14 provided emergency housing in a hotel or motel within the district, if available,
15 until adequate community-based shelter space becomes available in the
16 district. The utilization of hotel and motel rooms pursuant to this subdivision
17 shall be capped at 1,100 rooms per night between September 15, 2025 through
18 November 30, 2025 and between April 1, 2026 through June 30, 2026.

19 (2) The maximum number of days that an eligible household receives
20 emergency housing in a hotel or motel under this section, per 12-month period,
21 shall not exceed 80 days.

22 (3) The Department shall provide emergency winter housing to
23 households meeting the eligibility criteria in subsection (a) of this section

1 between December 1, 2025 and March 31, 2026. Emergency housing in a
2 hotel or motel provided pursuant to this subdivision shall not count toward the
3 maximum days of eligibility per 12-month period provided in subdivision (2)
4 of this subsection.

5 (4)(A) Notwithstanding any rule or law to the contrary, the Department
6 shall require all households applying for or receiving General Assistance
7 Emergency Housing to engage in their own search for and accept any available
8 alternative housing placements. All applicants and eligible households shall
9 regularly provide information to the Department, not less frequently than
10 monthly, about their efforts to secure an alternative housing placement. If the
11 Department determines that a household, at the time of application or during
12 the term of the household's authorization, has not made efforts to secure an
13 alternative housing placement, or has access to an alternative housing
14 placement, the Department shall deny the application or terminate the
15 authorization at the end of the current authorization period.

16 (B) For purposes of this subdivision (4), "alternative housing
17 placements" may include shelter beds and pods; placements with family or
18 friends; permanent housing solutions, including tiny homes, manufactured
19 homes, and apartments; residential treatment beds for physical health, long-
20 term care, substance use, or mental health; nursing home beds; and recovery
21 homes.

1 (c) Emergency housing provided pursuant to this section shall replace the
2 catastrophic and noncatastrophic categories previously adopted by the
3 Department in rule.

4 (d) Emergency housing required pursuant to this section may be provided
5 through approved community-based shelters, new unit generation, open units,
6 licensed hotels or motels, or other appropriate shelter space. The Department
7 shall, when available, prioritize emergency housing at housing or shelter
8 placements other than hotels or motels.

9 (e) Case management services provided by case managers employed by or
10 under contract with the Agency of Human Services or reimbursed through an
11 Agency-funded grant shall include assisting clients with finding appropriate
12 housing.

13 (f) The Commissioner for Children and Families shall apply the General
14 Assistance Emergency Housing rules approved by the Legislative Committee
15 on Administrative Rules on March 13, 2025 for the administration of this
16 section.

17 (g) On or before the last day of each month from July 2025 through June
18 2026, the Department for Children and Families, or other relevant agency or
19 department, shall continue submitting a similar report to that due pursuant to
20 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 81, Sec. 6(b) to the Joint Fiscal Committee,
21 House Committee on Human Services, and Senate Committee on Health and
22 Welfare. Additionally, this report shall include the Department's monthly
23 expenditure on General Assistance Emergency Housing.

1 (h) For emergency housing provided in a hotel or motel beginning on July
2 1, 2024 and thereafter, the Department for Children and Families shall not pay
3 a hotel or motel establishment more than the hotel's lowest advertised room
4 rate and not more than \$80 a day per room to shelter a household experiencing
5 homelessness. The Department for Children and Families may shelter a
6 household in more than one hotel or motel room depending on the household's
7 size and composition.

8 (i) The Department for Children and Families shall apply the following
9 rules to participating hotels and motels:

10 (1) Section 2650.1 of the Department for Children and Families'
11 General Assistance (CVR 13-170-260);

12 (2) Department of Health, Licensed Lodging Establishment Rule (CVR
13 13-140-023); and

14 (3) Department of Public Safety, Vermont Fire and Building Safety
15 Code (CVR 28-070-001).

16 (j)(1) The Department for Children and Families may work with either a
17 shelter provider or a community housing agency to enter into a full or partial
18 facility lease or sales agreement with a hotel or motel provider. Any facility
19 conversion under this section shall comply with the Office of Economic
20 Opportunity's shelter standards.

21 (2) If the Department for Children and Families determines that a
22 contractual agreement with a licensed hotel or motel operator to secure
23 temporary emergency housing capacity is beneficial to improve the quality,

1 cleanliness, or access to services for those households temporarily housed in
2 the facility, the Department shall be authorized to enter into such an agreement
3 in accordance with the per-room rate identified in subsection (h) of this
4 section; provided, however, that in no event shall such an agreement cause a
5 household to become unhoused. The Department for Children and Families
6 may include provisions to address access to services or related needs within the
7 contractual agreement.

8 (k) Of the amount appropriated to implement this section, not more than
9 \$500,000 shall be used for security costs.

10 (l) As used in this section:

11 (1) “Community-based shelter” means a shelter that meets the Vermont
12 Housing Opportunity Grant Program’s Standards of Provision of Assistance.

13 (2) “Household” means an individual and any dependents for whom the
14 individual is legally responsible and who live in Vermont. “Household”
15 includes individuals who reside together as one economic unit, including those
16 who are married, parties to a civil union, or unmarried.