



Memo to the Vermont House Human Services Committee

From: Paul Dragon

Subject: Clarification on Funding History and Ongoing Needs of the HOME Family Housing Voucher Program (HOME)

Purpose

This memo provides background and clarification regarding the establishment, funding history, and current needs of the HOME Family Housing Voucher Program (HOME), which is a rapid-rehousing program serving families with children experiencing homelessness.

Background

The HOME Family Housing Voucher Program was established in 2024 and modeled after the successful CARES Housing Voucher Program which provided 272 households exiting homelessness with 18 months of rental assistance between 9/1/20 and 9/30/22. HOME was designed to provide up to 200 families with up to 24 months of rental assistance as well as a security deposit, with the payments going directly to the landlord. Households are required to pay 30% of their income towards housing costs and to be connected with a housing support worker at a Community Action or other social service agency. Families are referred to the program through Coordinated Entry. These vouchers act as a vital bridge between homelessness and housing stability for our clients, supporting them temporarily while they work on long-term housing solutions and stability.

To date, 573 households have applied to the program, representing 765 adults and 1,028 children statewide. Of those who were qualified, we provided financial assistance to 214 households, or 273 adults and 373 children. Currently, 77 households are still receiving assistance. Of the 136 households no longer receive assistance, 46 have transitioned to long-term vouchers and 30 remained housed without assistance. This shows that after being supported by the program, 55% of our participants were able to stabilize and self-sustained their housing cost, with one family able to purchase a house.

Funding History

- **OEO Funding:** OEO provided funding for the program, which was scheduled to end in June 2026. Due to staff vacancy savings and the challenges that approved participants faced in securing housing (see below), we were able to use available funds to extend the program through December 2026.
- **Additional Funding:** Flexible funding from CVOEO's Housing & Family Support (Donation) Program provides \$750 Welcome HOME stipends to newly housed families so that they can purchase items needed to create a safe, clean, and comfortable environment. At this time, 124 out of the 200 Welcome HOME vouchers have been utilized.

Challenges

- Throughout the program's history, HOME voucher holders have struggled to secure housing due to a low stock of adequate, safe, and affordable units within the Fair Market Rate. The average time from pre-approval to lease up is 100 days.
- The high turnover rates among Housing Support Workers adversely impacts continuity and effectiveness of support services.
- The lack of long-term housing subsidies, such as Housing Choice Vouchers, and openings in subsidized buildings makes it difficult for HOME participants to transition to more long-term vouchers. This means that current HOME voucher holders have few options for support beyond the allocated 24 months.

Current Need

Current funding will only allow us to continue operating until **Dec. 31, 2026**. This means 53 families currently in the program will not see the benefits of a full 24 months of support. Several pre-approved participants cannot secure housing without 12 months of available subsidy, hindering their journey towards possible housing stability because most landlords are not willing to sign leases for less than a year.

An additional **\$1.5 million** dollars of funding would provide assistance for the families that we are currently serving as well as vouchers for up to **50 additional** families for up to **24 months** (including security deposits) including all administration costs.

This program has shown its effectiveness in addressing access to affordable housing and providing an essential and supported transition from homelessness to housing stability through its embedded service support and education.

Ongoing funding is critical to ensuring continuity of housing subsidies for families exiting homelessness and providing a bridge between temporary and long-term housing vouchers.

Testimonials

“Without the voucher, I am not sure where they (the client) would have ended up – it certainly prevented them from being homeless or possibly even needing to leave Vermont. It made all the difference in the world for this vulnerable family. The HOME Voucher was a vital bridge to their new, stable life” – **Jan Steinbauer, CASAN chair**

“I’m very thankful and appreciative of the HOME voucher. It has given my family a place to live so we are not homeless, and it has made it so we continuously have somewhere safe over our heads” – **client from St. Albans**

“This family has benefited from the support of this voucher because their income has fluctuated and this voucher helped them sustain housing for the past few years. It also helped them save money and helped them understand what their budget needs to look like to sustain housing on their own” – **Brenda Kingsbury, HPCVT Family Supportive Housing Coordinator**