

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Human Services to which was referred House Bill No.
3 91 entitled “An act relating to the Emergency Temporary Shelter Program”
4 respectfully reports that it has considered the same and recommends that the
5 bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in
6 lieu thereof the following:

7 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

8 The General Assembly finds that:

9 (1) according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban
10 Development’s 2024 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report, Vermont had
11 the fourth highest rate of homelessness in 2024 in that 53 of every 10,000
12 Vermonters are experiencing homelessness, with only Hawaii, New York, and
13 Oregon experiencing higher rates;

14 (2) in 2023, according to the same Annual Homelessness Assessment
15 Report, 51 of every 10,000 Vermonters were experiencing homelessness;

16 (3) currently in Vermont, there are approximately 3,458 unhoused
17 individuals, which represents a 300 percent increase over the 1,110 unhoused
18 individuals prior to the COVID pandemic in 2020;

19 (4) in 2024, over 35 percent of those Vermonters experiencing homeless
20 were unhoused for more than one year and over 72 percent were unhoused for
21 more than 90 days;

1 (5) in 2024, 737 of those Vermonters experiencing homelessness were
2 children and youth under 18 years of age and 646 were 55 years of age or
3 older; and

4 (6) Black Vermonters are 5.6 times more likely to be unhoused as
5 compared to white Vermonters.

6 Sec. 2. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

7 (a) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the Vermont Homeless
8 Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program
9 established in 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 is a step toward ensuring that:

10 (1) unsheltered homelessness be addressed in Vermont and interim
11 shelter opportunities be available to provide a stable pathway to permanent
12 housing for all Vermonters experiencing homelessness;

13 (2) Vermont increase the supply of need-specific emergency and
14 transitional shelter as well as permanent supportive housing that is accessible
15 to individuals with a health condition or disability;

16 (3) Vermont increase access to supportive housing for families and
17 children;

18 (4) community components of an emergency and transitional shelter
19 program are integrated in a systemic manner that address unsheltered
20 homelessness;

1 (5) arbitrary time limits, night-by-night shelter, relocation between
2 interim shelter sites and other disruptions in housing stability be eliminated to
3 the extent possible;

4 (6) Vermont’s emergency housing statutes, rules, policies, procedures,
5 and practices incorporate Housing First principles; and

6 (7) noncongregate shelter be used to the extent possible.

7 (b) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the Vermont Homeless
8 Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program
9 established in 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 replaces the provision of emergency
10 housing through the General Assistance Program established in 33 V.S.A.
11 chapter 21 and the Housing Opportunity Program.

12 Sec. 3. 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 is added to read:

13 CHAPTER 22. VERMONT HOMELESS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

14 AND RESPONSIVE TRANSITION TO HOUSING PROGRAM

15 § 2201. DEFINITIONS

16 As used in this chapter:

17 (1) “Commissioner” means the Commissioner for Children and
18 Families.

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

21 (3) “Department” means the Department for Children and Families.

1 (4) “Extreme weather event” means extreme hot or cold temperatures or
2 weather events, such as hurricanes, lightning storms, tornadoes, flooding, or
3 blizzards, that create hazardous conditions for outdoor habitation by humans.

4 (5) “Homeless” means lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime
5 residence.

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

10 (7) “Regional resource organization” means an organization designated
11 by the Department to lead the assigned region’s response to preventing and
12 addressing unsheltered homelessness.

13 § 2202. ESTABLISHMENT; VERMONT HOMELESS EMERGENCY

14 ASSISTANCE AND RESPONSIVE TRANSITION TO HOUSING
15 PROGRAM

16 The Vermont Homeless Emergency Assistance and Responsive Transition
17 to Housing Program is established in the Department and shall be composed
18 of:

19 (1) a grant program operated by a statewide organization representing
20 municipalities under contract with the Department to provide congregate
21 shelter during extreme weather events pursuant section 2203 if this chapter;

1 (2) temporary emergency shelters operated or caused to be operated by
2 regional resource organizations pursuant to section 2204 of this chapter; and

3 (3) transitional shelters operated or caused to be operated by regional
4 resource organizations pursuant to section 2205 of this chapter.

5 § 2203. EXTREME WEATHER EVENT SHELTER

6 (a) The Department shall contract with a statewide organization
7 representing municipalities for the operation of shelters throughout the State
8 that shall be used by the organization during extreme weather events to shelter
9 any homeless individual who presents themselves at the shelter. A shelter
10 offered pursuant to this section during an extreme weather event may include
11 time-limited congregate accommodations.

12 (b) The Department shall adopt guidance for the organization representing
13 municipalities under contract with the Department regarding when extreme
14 weather event shelters shall be operated.

15 (c) The Department shall maintain a website with the locations of all
16 extreme weather event shelters.

17 § 2204. EMERGENCY TEMPORARY SHELTER

18 A regional resource organization shall serve eligible households in its
19 service area in need of the services of a temporary emergency shelter in the
20 manner it deems best to meet the needs of the service area. A regional
21 resource organization may provide or cause to be provided temporary

1 emergency shelter through community-based shelters, temporary use of hotels
2 or motels, lease agreements for full or partial use of an existing building, need-
3 specific shelter arrangements, or other arrangements or combinations of
4 arrangements that comply with the intent of this chapter.

5 § 2205. TRANSITIONAL SHELTER

6 A regional resource organization shall serve eligible households in its
7 service area in need of the services of a permanent shelter in the manner it
8 deems best to meet the needs of the service area. A regional resource
9 organization may provide or cause to be provided permanent shelter through
10 master grant leases, developing shelter capacity, or other arrangements or
11 combinations of arrangements that comply with the intent of this chapter.

12 § 2206. CASE MANAGEMENT

13 A regional resource organization shall offer or cause to be offered case
14 management services to unhoused or precariously housed households in its
15 service area, including household needs assessments, individualized household
16 plans to address identified needs, assistance obtaining and retaining housing,
17 including financial assistance, referrals to other services and supports,
18 mediation with landlords, advocacy, and progress monitoring and
19 interventions.

1 § 2207. ELIGIBILITY

2 A regional resource organization shall provide or cause to be provided
3 temporary emergency housing and transitional housing pursuant to sections
4 2204 and 2205 of this chapter to households that attest to lack of a fixed,
5 regular, and adequate nighttime residence and have a member who:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 (4) is pregnant;

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

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

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

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

11 § 2208. REGIONAL RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS

12 (a) The Department shall designate a regional resource organization within
13 each service area of the State to serve or cause to have served eligible
14 households that are experiencing homelessness or that are precariously housed
15 by providing temporary emergency shelter, transitional shelter, or other
16 supportive services pursuant to sections 2203, 2204, and 2206 of this chapter.

17 The Department shall conduct a redesignation review of each regional resource
18 organization at least every three years.

19 (b) A regional resource organization shall:

1 (1) have existing infrastructure to support eligible households in the
2 service area, including an established leadership team, human resources staff,
3 the ability to receive grant funding, and issue subgrants;

4 (2) have the ability to meet the Department’s reporting requirements,
5 including past history of reporting compliance;

6 (3) have community connections with other providers in the region,
7 including providers of coordinated entry, mental health and disability services,
8 substance use disorder services, and services for older Vermonters; and

9 (4) be a community action agency.

10 (c)(1) The Department shall consult with the regional resource
11 organizations to develop appropriate resources allocations. The resource
12 allocation shall take economic indicators, rate of homelessness, rental vacancy
13 rates, and other variables into account, as appropriate.

14 (2) Annually, the Department shall distribute funding to each regional
15 resource organization using the allocation developed pursuant to subdivision
16 (1) of this subsection. If the Department and regional resource organizations
17 agree, the Department may disperse a joint allocation for all regional resource
18 organizations, which the regional resource organizations shall decide how to
19 distribute amongst themselves.

20 (d) The Department shall consult with the regional resource organizations
21 to develop appropriate measures and methods for accountability of regional

1 resource organizations. The regional resource organizations shall provide any
2 previously agreed upon information to enable the Department to evaluate the
3 services provided through grant funds, the effect on households receiving
4 services, and accounting expended grant funds.

5 § 2209. REGIONAL PLANNING; NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

6 (a) At least every three years beginning on January 15, 2030, the regional
7 resource organizations shall jointly develop a regional needs assessment for
8 use in each regional resource organization’s service area to inform future plans
9 to address housing and homelessness in each service area. Each plan shall:

10 (1) address progress in reducing the number of households experiencing
11 homelessness in a service area;

12 (2) assess the rate households placed in permanent housing return to
13 homelessness and the underlying reasons;

14 (3) identify resources developed and utilized in the service area to
15 address homelessness;

16 (4) determine the rate of household compliance with coordinated entry
17 processes;

18 (5) identify system gaps and the funding needed to address those gaps,
19 including periodic inflationary adjustments; and

1 (6) utilize existing information informed by the point-in-time count
2 produced by a statewide homeless advocacy organization, coordinated entry
3 assessment results, and community conversations.

4 (b) Each regional resource organization shall submit plans developed
5 pursuant to this section to the House Committee on Human Services and to the
6 Senate Committee on Health and Welfare.

7 § 2210. USE OF HOTEL AND MOTEL ROOMS

8 (a) Hotels and motels providing temporary emergency shelter or
9 transitional shelter pursuant to this chapter shall comply with:

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 (b) Annually, the Department shall propose hotel and motel rates as part of
17 its budget presentation for approval by the General Assembly. A regional
18 resource organization shall not pay more on a per room, per night basis than
19 that rate approved by the General Assembly. A regional resource organization
20 may enter into contracts for the use of blocks of hotel and motel rooms and

1 negotiation the conditions of use for those blocks, including access for
2 providers of case management other support services.

3 Sec. 4. VERMONT HOMELESS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE AND
4 RESPONSIVE TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAM
5 IMPLEMENTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

6 (a) Creation. There is created the Vermont Homeless Emergency
7 Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program Implementation
8 Advisory Committee to provide advice and recommendations to the
9 Commissioner for Children and Families and to the regional resource
10 organizations as defined in 33 V.S.A. chapter 22 regarding the design,
11 implementation, and transition to the Vermont Homeless Emergency
12 Assistance and Responsive Transition to Housing Program established in 33
13 V.S.A. chapter 22.

14 (b) Membership. The Advisory Committee’s membership shall reflect the
15 growing diversity among Vermonters, including individuals who are Black,
16 Indigenous, and Persons of Color, as well as with regard to socioeconomic
17 status, geographic location, gender, sexual identity, and disability status and
18 shall be composed of:

19 (1) five individuals with lived experience of homelessness, appointed by
20 the lead coordinated entry agency;

1 (2) two individuals representing the regional resource organizations,
2 appointed by the community action agencies;

3 (3) a representative of the coordinated entry agency in Chittenden
4 County;

5 (4) a representative of the remaining coordinated entry organizations in
6 the State, appointed by the Housing and Homelessness Alliance of Vermont;

7 (5) the Commissioner for Children and Families or designee;

8 (6) the Deputy Commissioner of the Department for Children and
9 Families' Economic Services Division or designee;

10 (7) the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living or
11 designee;

12 (8) the Commissioner of Mental Health or designee;

13 (9) the Commissioner of Corrections or designee;

14 (10) the Commissioner of Health or designee; and

15 (11) a representative, appointed by Vermont Care Partners.

16 (c) Assistance. The Advisory Committee shall have the administrative,
17 technical, and legal assistance of the Department for Children and Families.

18 (d) Meetings.

19 (1) The Commissioner shall call the first meeting of the Advisory
20 Committee to occur on or before July 15, 2026.

1 (2) The Committee shall select a chair or co-chairs from among its
2 members at the first meeting.

3 (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

4 (e) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Advisory
5 Committee shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of
6 expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than 12 meetings
7 annually. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the
8 Department.

9 (f) Sunset. The Advisory Committee shall cease to exist on July 1, 2029.

10 Sec. 5. APPROPRIATION; TRANSITION PLANNING

11 In fiscal year 2026, \$10,000,000.00 of one-time funding is appropriated
12 from the General Fund as follows:

13 (1) \$5,000,000.00 to the Department for Children and Families for
14 distribution to the regional resource organizations;

15 (2) \$500,000.00 to the Department for Children and Families for
16 contractual and other system transformation assistance; and

17 (3) \$4,500,000.00 to the Department for Children and Families for the
18 continued development of need-specific housing throughout the State, such as
19 recovery housing, housing for individuals with disabilities, family housing, and
20 transitional housing for individuals exiting the custody of the Commissioner of
21 Corrections.

