



Homelessness Awareness Day 2025

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House Human Services

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Director of Economic Empowerment

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you regarding the housing challenges faced by Vermonters experiencing domestic and sexual violence on this Homelessness Awareness Day.

The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence is the leading statewide voice on issues of domestic and sexual violence. Our coalition has 15 member organizations that work in every town in Vermont, including supporting survivors fleeing violence with shelter, motel overflow, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and accessing the GA Emergency Housing program.

Domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness for women and children. In the most recent Point In Time Count, out of the 3,458 households that were homeless, 309 of them were specifically reported as fleeing domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence or stalking. This past year our member organizations supported 1,128 individuals with emergency housing for a total of 74,116 bednights.

The lack of safe, affordable housing across Vermont and the nation exacerbates the challenges faced by so many victims seeking safety. Where survivors used to be able to use shelters as a short-term emergency solution before going on to find stable housing, they are now staying in shelters longer; unable to find housing sometimes even with subsidies. In 2024 the average length of stay in a DV shelter was 58 days.

Domestic and sexual violence advocates and community partners provide vital supports to homeless survivors and their families. The Network appreciates the support that is given federally, through the legislature, and our local communities that allows this work to continue. The Housing Opportunity grant Program provides almost \$4million to our member organizations to support emergency shelter, shelter overflow in motels, coordinated entry, essential services and more. And while we often hear about people's experience in shelter, we don't often hear about what happens when funding can support a household to avoid homelessness, or what happens when someone is able to successfully move into housing. As a HOP Financial Assistance provider the VT Network provided over \$219,000 in assistance last year to 127 households. This included preventing homelessness for 59 households.



To give you a snapshot of what this means in the every day lives of Vermonters:

- A survivor and her child were able to move into a subsidized unit after years of living in a place not meant for human habitation- no running water, sewer and limited access to electricity. They were told they needed to leave with no place to go. We were able to support this household to move into a safe, affordable place that they were referred to from Coordinated Entry.
- Another survivor was at imminent risk of homelessness due to domestic violence. This survivor had to cut back hours at work to heal from a domestic violence related injury. We were able to support her and her children in the affordable unit with short-term rental assistance.

Thank you for your commitment to finding a solution to the complex problems we face around housing, homelessness and providing support to the most vulnerable in our state. We look forward to the continued partnership with DCF, the legislature, our partners and our communities as we continue to work toward our vision of a thriving Vermont, free from violence.