

General Assistance and Emergency Housing Program



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Presentation to the Human Services Committee

General Assistance and Emergency Housing Program background information

Slides 14-31 are informational only and not a part of formal testimony

Program overview now

Act 113 – State Fiscal Year 2025

Homelessness is not verified – applicant attests.

Vermont is a "shelter first" state - if a shelter bed is available, the applicant must accept it.

Language from statute:

Eligibility is determined based on the household, or a member of the household must be:

- Age 65+
- Has a disability (SSI, SSDI, Medical Variance form)
- Child(ren) age 19 and under
- Pregnant
- Has experienced the death of a spouse, domestic partner, minor child that caused the housing loss.
- Has experienced a natural disaster that caused the housing loss.
- Court ordered or constructive eviction (no fault of the household)
- Experienced domestic or similar dangerous violence that caused the housing loss.

Length of assistance:

- 80 Day Limit during non-adverse weather: Participants in the program will only be allowed a total of 80 days to stay in motels/hotels from July 1 - November 30, 2024, and April 1- June 30, 2025.

Room Limits:

- There is a room cap of 1,100 hotel/motel rooms per night during September 15 – November 30, 2024, and April 1- June 30, 2025. This means that even if you are eligible for emergency housing, we will not be able to house you if all 1,100 rooms are occupied.
- No room caps will be imposed from December 1, 2024, - March 31, 2025.

Accountability: Action Steps Since Last Session – GA Program

Monday, July 1 – 80-day limit begins

- Communication – hotels, clients, municipalities, agencies, community partners, internal
- Training
- Tracking
- Planning for room caps and exhausting 80-day limits

Sunday, September 15 – 1,100-room cap in effect

- Going into this date there were 1,420 rooms being used
- Massive call volume starting on a Sunday
- Communication, tracking, training and planning

Thursday, September 19 – Participants start reaching their 80-day limit

- Administrative procedure to prioritize higher risk populations (implemented on Monday, September 16)

Sunday, December 1 – Cold Weather eligibility begins - 80-day limit and 1,100-room cap suspended until March 31, 2025

Accountability: Action Steps Since Last Session – Shelter Expansion

Housing Opportunity Grant Program Annual Notice of Funding Opportunity

- Maintained & created new shelter capacity

\$10 Million Additional Shelter Expansion Capacity

- Prepare & issue Notice of Funding
- Outreach - Conversations with several cities and towns, Community partner awareness and town halls
- Review of proposals & issue awards
- Project tracking and modifications
 - Delays – providers, acquisition, proposal changes, workforce, federal approval, permitting
- Project implementation (policy review, TTA, etc.)
 - Delays – providers, construction, workforce, purchase, federal approval, permitting

State-Operated Shelters

- Williston and Waterbury

Constant contact with affected communities and community partners

Accountability: Transparency, Communication and Engagement

[Website: Addressing and Preventing Unsheltered Homelessness | Department for Children and Families](#)

- Data updated weekly
- Past and present communications
- Resources
- Changing laws, rules, and procedures

ESD has worked with just over 5200 unique households between 7/1/24 and 12/31/24

In addition to all the below:

- Communications planning
- Meeting with hotel/motel owners and managers
- Municipal conversations
- Training
- Community partner town halls
- Coordination with shelter expansion and planning

Households By District

This is the current district data on all households in the GA Housing program as of 12/30/2024.

| District Office | Rooms | Households | Adults | Children |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Barre District Office | 161 | 158 | 211 | 45 |
| Bennington District Office | 145 | 143 | 172 | 52 |
| Brattleboro District Office | 238 | 231 | 303 | 76 |
| Burlington District Office | 298 | 297 | 371 | 72 |
| Hartford District Office | 66 | 66 | 81 | 14 |
| Middlebury District Office | * | * | * | * |
| Morrisville District Office | * | * | * | * |
| Newport District Office | 26 | 26 | 29 | * |
| Rutland District Office | 234 | 228 | 292 | 100 |
| Springfield District Office | 62 | 62 | 79 | 15 |
| St Albans District Office | 63 | 63 | 76 | * |
| St Johnsbury District Office | 51 | 51 | 60 | * |
| Total | 1376 | 1357 | 1713 | 414 |

*Redacted due to count size

Households Eligibility Categories

This is the current eligibility data on all households in the GA Housing program as of 12/30/2024.

| Approval Category | Count |
|--|-------------|
| Age 65+ | 96 |
| Court Ordered/Constructive Eviction | 36 |
| Disabled (201G-VR) | 345 |
| Disabled (SSI/SSDI) | 529 |
| Domestic Violence | 55 |
| Families with Children | 263 |
| Pregnant | 22 |
| Natural Disaster | * |
| Death of a Spouse, Domestic Partner or Minor Child | * |
| Grand Total | 1357 |

Notes: The [range of individuals in SSI/SSDI](#) crosses a range of acuity and health challenge– it can be mental health, chronic health condition, or a physical disability. As of 3/15/2024, disability can be verified by a licensed medical professional and [Disability Variance Form](#) can be submitted.

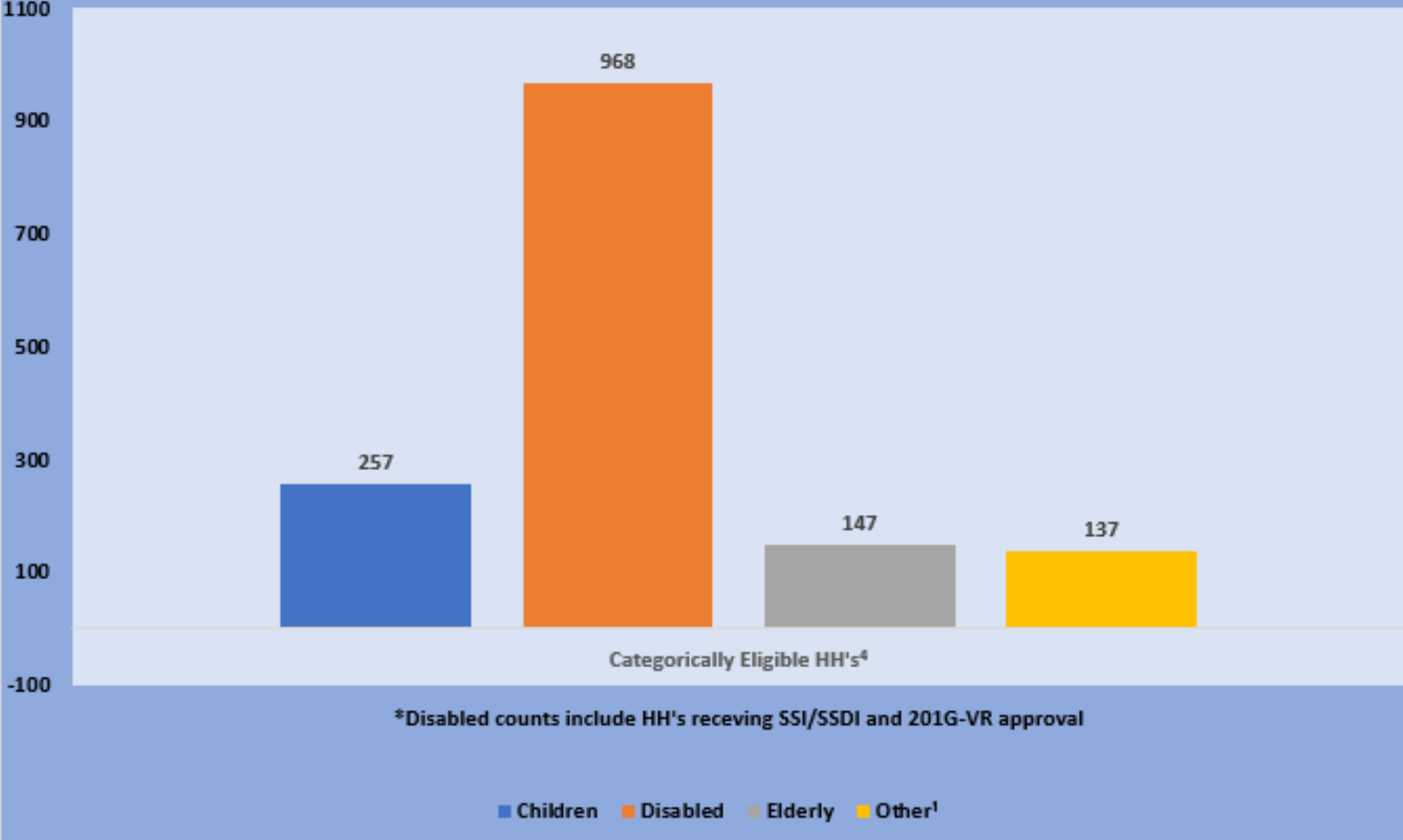
*Redacted due to count size

Eligible Households unable to be housed in December 2024

| District | Households |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Barre District Office | 52 |
| Bennington District Office | 42 |
| Brattleboro District Office | 40 |
| Burlington District Office | 138 |
| Hartford District Office | 22 |
| Middlebury District Office | * |
| Morrisville District Office | * |
| Newport District Office | 16 |
| Rutland District Office | 81 |
| Springfield District Office | 18 |
| St. Albans District Office | 30 |
| St. Johnsbury District Office | * |
| Grand Total | 466 |

*Redacted due to count size

of Children, Disabled, and Elderly (Over 65)



Data is from 12/30/2024

Administrative Procedures for Act 113

During times where the number of eligible households exceeds 90% of the 1,100 per night room cap, or 90% of hotel capacity during time periods when the 1,100 per night room cap is not in place, the department will use the following procedure for providing emergency housing assistance.

High Risk Households

Households with a member who:

- Is a child 19 years of age or under.
- Is pregnant.
- Is experiencing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, hate violence, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions related to violence against the individual that caused the household to lose its housing.
- Is 65 years of age or older.
- Is otherwise categorically eligible and includes a member who is 50 years of age or older.

Length of Authorization

- Granted in up-to 28-day increments.

Applying with ESD

- Can apply for emergency housing anytime.
- Can reapply for housing up to 10 days in advance of the end date of their current authorization.

All Other Eligible Households

Length of Authorization

- Granted in up-to-14-day increments.

Applying with ESD

- Can apply for emergency housing between the hours of 12pm and 4:30pm Monday through Friday.
- Can reapply for housing on the day their current authorization ends.

Procedure is available online:

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/Addressing-and-Preventing-Unsheltered-Homelessness>

Current Shelter Capacity

| County | Total Current Household Capacity (point in time) | Additional Awarded Housing Opportunity Grant Program Projects Anticipated Online January - March (point in time) |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Addison | 62 | |
| Bennington | 31 | |
| Caledonia | 35 | |
| Chittenden | 147 | Two seasonal shelter projects (an additional 60) |
| Franklin | 25 | Two new shelters (an additional 19) |
| Lamoille | 28 | |
| Orleans | 7 | |
| Rutland | 22 | New emergency shelter apartment capacity (an additional 6) |
| Washington | 114 | |
| Windham | 68 | Expanded seasonal capacity (an additional 6 in January and 6 in February) |
| Windsor | 48 | |
| Grand Total | 591 | 97 |

New Shelters in 2025

- Funding in State Fiscal Year 2025 preserved shelter capacity created with one-time funds and created new shelter capacity in 8 counties around the state.
- This creates capacity for 688 households, compared to 519 households in January 2024. This includes the state operated shelters in Williston and Waterbury.
- Project details are available at [Housing Opportunity Grant Program SFY25 Awards Summary](#)
- The State continues to develop and support plans for additional shelter capacity and will provide updates in the monthly Act 113 report as awards are made and plans are finalized.

What does “homeless” mean?

Category 1: Literal Homelessness

- Unsheltered (*place not meant for human habitation*)
- Staying in an emergency shelter, including domestic violence (DV) shelters
- Staying in an emergency apartment (for families)
- Staying in a host home (for unaccompanied minors)
- Staying in transitional housing for the homeless (e.g., Veterans Place in Northfield)
- Staying in a motel paid for by a community partner (e.g., DV shelter)
- In the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program – aka, receiving a “motel voucher”

Definition of Homelessness

Published by HUD-
November 15, 2011;
Adopted by the Vermont
Agency of Human
Services

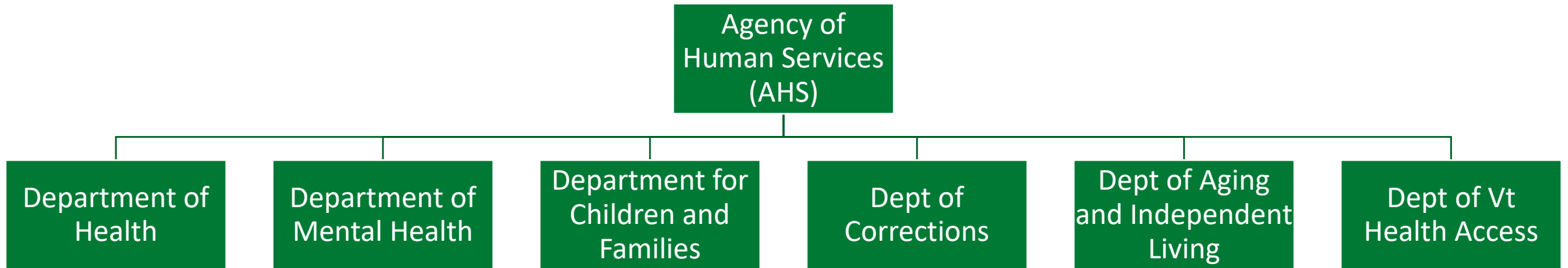
| | | | |
|---|------------|---|---|
| CRITERIA FOR DEFINING HOMELESSNESS | Category 1 | Literally Homeless | <p>(1) Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground; (ii) Is living in supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals); OR (iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution. |
| | Category 2 | Imminent Risk of Homelessness | <p>(2) Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance; (ii) No subsequent residence has been identified; AND (iii) The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks, e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, needed to obtain other permanent housing. |
| | Category 3 | Homeless under other Federal statutes | <p>(3) Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Are defined as homeless under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (42 U.S.C. 5732a, section 387), the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9832, section 637), the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e-2, section 41403), the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b(h), section 330(h)), the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2012, section 3), the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786(b), section 17(b)) or McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a, section 725); (ii) Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing at any time during the 60 days immediately preceding the date of application for homeless assistance; (iii) Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the preceding 60-days; AND (iv) Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse (including neglect), the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or two or more barriers to employment, which include the lack of a high school degree or GED, illiteracy, low English proficiency, a history of incarceration or detention for criminal activity, and a history of unstable employment. |
| | Category 4 | Fleeing/ Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence | <p>(4) Any individual or family who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member, including a child, that has either taken place within the individual's or family's primary nighttime residence or has made the individual or family afraid to return to their primary nighttime residence; (ii) Has no other residence; AND (iii) Lacks the resources or support networks, e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks, to obtain other permanent housing. |

Definition of at Risk of Homelessness

HUD Interim ESG Regulation – Congruent with definition adopted by Vermont Agency of Human Services

| | | | |
|--|------------|----------------------------------|---|
| CRITERIA FOR DEFINING AT RISK OF HOMELESSNESS | Category 1 | Individuals and Families | <p>An individual or family who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Has an annual income below 30%² of median family income for the county; AND (iv) Does not have sufficient resources or support networks immediately available to prevent them from moving to an emergency shelter or another place defined in Category 1 of the “homeless” definition; AND (v) Meets one of the following conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (A) Has moved because of economic reasons 2 or more times during the 60 days immediately preceding the application for assistance; OR (B) Is living in the home of another because of economic hardship; OR (C) Has been notified that their right to occupy their current housing or living situation will be terminated within 21 days after the date of application for assistance; OR (D) Lives in a hotel or motel and the cost is not paid for by charitable organizations or by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals; OR (E) Lives in an SRO or efficiency apartment unit in which there reside more than 2 persons or lives in a larger housing unit in which there reside more than one and a half persons per room; OR (F) Is exiting a publicly funded institution or system of care. |
| | Category 2 | Unaccompanied Children and Youth | A child or youth who does not qualify as homeless under the homeless definition, but qualifies as homeless under another Federal statute. |
| | Category 3 | Families with Children and Youth | A child or youth who does not qualify as homeless under the homeless definition, but qualifies as homeless under section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and the parent(s) or guardian(s) or that child or youth if living with him or her. |

AHS Organizational Chart



Examples of Housing Supports in AHS

Department of Mental Health: 154 Residential Mental Health Treatment beds. 68 Intensive Residential Treatment beds.

Over \$1.4 million to assist with housing vouchers and programs. Administration of the PATH program (outreach)

Department of Health: 96 Recovery Housing beds. Over \$2.8 million in housing assistance programs.

Department of Corrections: 245 Transitional Housing beds. 13 Community-based provider agencies.

Department of Aging and Independent Living: 2,873 Skilled Nursing Facility beds.

Department for Children and Families:

- Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) has awarded approximately \$27 million of Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP) funding to 38 non-profit organizations in FY25. Also looking to award \$10 million to organizations focusing on increasing shelter capacity in Vermont. Administers a number of other housing programs (Family Supportive Housing, Landlord Relief Program, HOME Vouchers, ERAP Housing Stability Services, HUD COC Coordinated Entry, Emergency Food and Shelter Program)
- Economic Services Division (ESD) provides emergency housing assistance to eligible Vermonters for up to 80 days (excluding 12/1-3/31 timeframe). Reach Up Case Managers often serve as housing case managers to Reach Up participants.
- Family Services Division (FSD) works with the VT State Housing Authority on the administration of Foster Youth Independence HUD vouchers in Vermont.
- OEO, ESD, and DCF Family Services collaborate with the VT State Housing Authority on the administration of Family Unification Vouchers in Vermont.

VT Team-Based Care

Team-Based Care is a best practice care coordination model designed for adults or children who need aid navigating multiple systems of care. The key tools and processes involved in Team-Based Care include:

- Eco Map
- Domain Cards
- Coordinated Services Plan
- Care Conferences
- Shared Care Planning

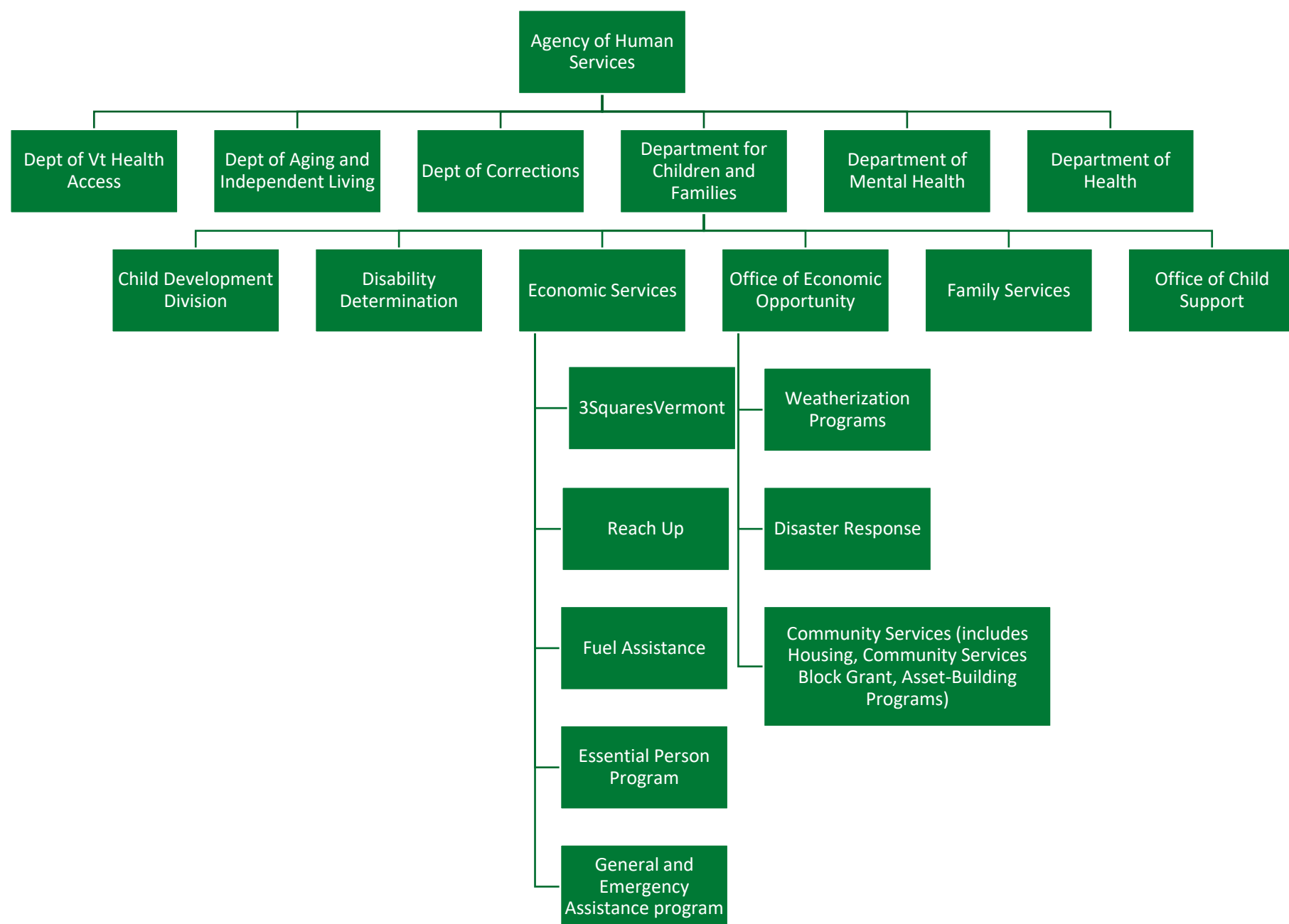
Team-Based Care is aimed at adults or children with chronic or acute mental, physical health, and social needs who are receiving services from multiple providers or need connection and coordination to providers. This includes individuals who:

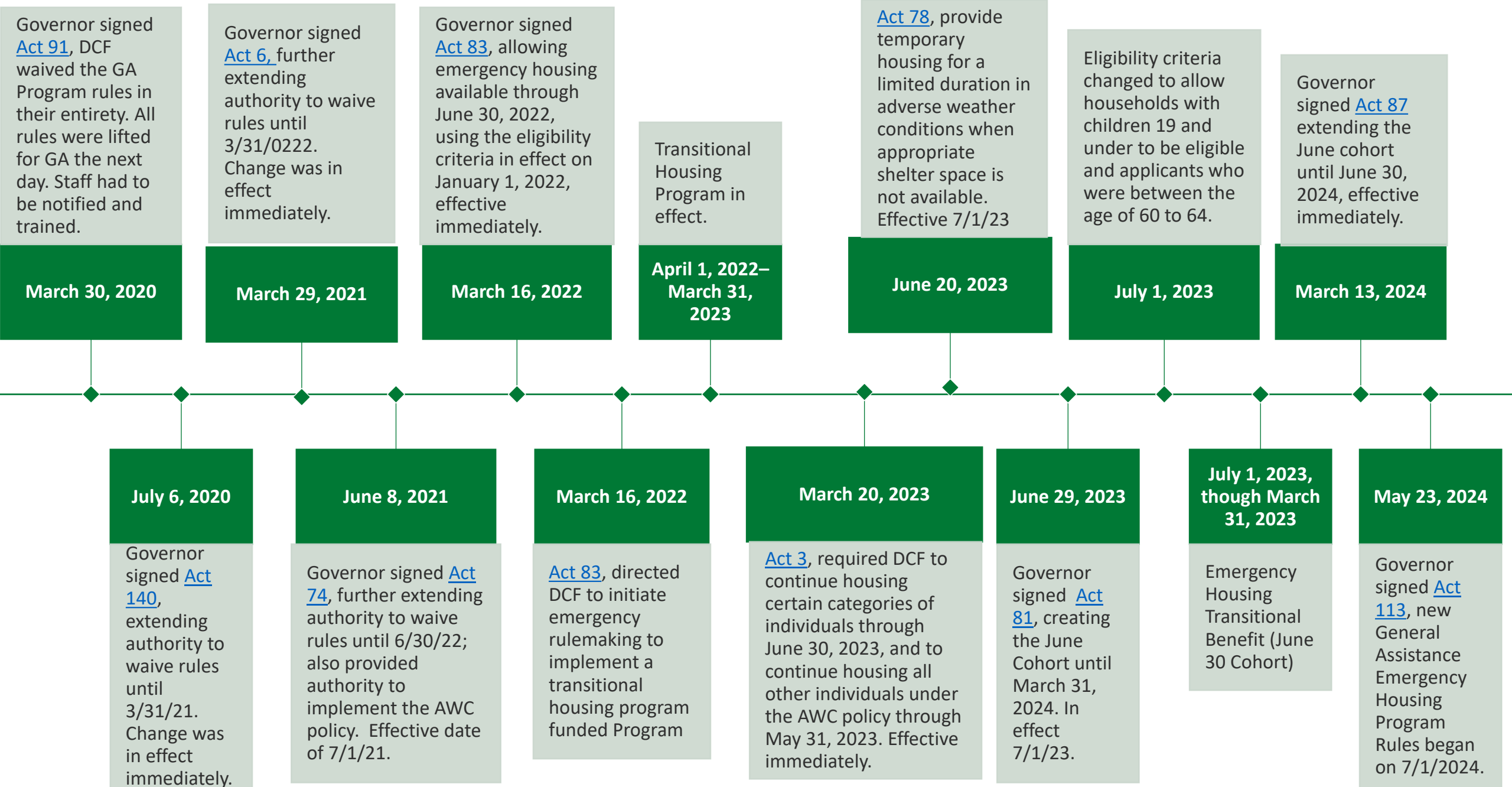
- Have difficulty attending appointments
- Struggle to manage their conditions
- Have had multiple emergency department visits in the past six months
- Find it challenging to navigate the healthcare system without assistance
- Have had multiple encounters with the juvenile or criminal justice system in the past six months

Assessment:

- 1. Identify Support Network:** Ask your clients who supports them, either professionally or personally. If they cannot name any support, ask if they are interested in having a lead case manager to coordinate their care team.
- 2. Obtain Consent:** Ensure clients sign a release of information form.
- 3. Verify Primary Care Provider Services:** Ask if the client has a primary care provider. If they have a Primary Care Provider, call the practice to see if they have a Community Health Team (CHT) member who is already assisting the client.
 - o If there is a CHT member assisting the client, check to see if there is already a care team in place.
 - o If not, and they have Medicaid, refer them to VCCI using this [referral form](#).
- 4. Engage Other Service Providers:** Reach out to any identified service providers to gather more information.
- 5. Consult with Field Director:** Contact your Field Director for guidance on presenting the case to the appropriate team:
 - o Adult Local Interagency Team
 - o Coordinated Service Plan Team (for child/youth)
 - o Community Health Team

Divisions and Offices within DCF





GA Program overview prior to 2020

In person applications and interview only.

Homelessness was verified.

Eligibility was determined based on categories:

Catastrophic for a maximum of 84 days

- Fire, Flood, Death of a Spouse or minor child
- Domestic Violence/Sexual Violence
- Constructive Eviction - No Cause
- Court ordered eviction

Vulnerable for a maximum of 28 days

- SSI/SSDI Recipient
- Age 65+
- Pregnant in 3rd trimester
- Children under 6 years old
- Points: Disabled Vet, Open Family Services Case, SSI/SSDI Applicant, discharged from hospital stay, discharged from DCF Custody w/in last 3 years, RU Recipient, Probation or Parole

Adverse Weather Conditions (night to night)

- Each year an Adverse Weather Conditions policy was published outlining the weather criteria and program rules
- Typically, from mid-November to sometime in April (no defined start/end date)
- Relaxed eligibility criteria to include anyone homeless, not just those categorically eligible, and no limit on number of nights (nights used during this time did count towards 12-month maximum number of nights)
- Period of Ineligibility if refused shelter bed

If a shelter bed was available, the applicant was required to accept it and was sent to the shelter for intake.

GA Program overview during COVID

In March 2020, during the State of Emergency due to the COVID outbreak, a law change allowed DCF to waive the General and Emergency Housing program rules. This change was necessary to keep people safe during the Global Pandemic.

What this meant for the program:

In person and phone applications were available.

In person and phone interview were available.

Homelessness was not verified; the applicant just had to need shelter.

No eligibility criteria, everyone who needed shelter was helped.

The program continued to change throughout the year to accommodate new recommendations and guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

2020 to 2021

Act 91 (2020) was the first law to expand access to the GA Emergency Housing Program. DCF waived the GA program rules 2600, in their entirety, including the eligibility requirements due to the State of Emergency during the COVID-19 outbreak.

DCF continued to modify the waiver and variance of rules for the GA Emergency Housing Program through spring of 2022 to decrease the spread of the COVID-19 virus. During this time, shelters were closing and people had to distance from each other.

2021 to 2022

Act 74 (2021) provided authority to implement the Adverse Weather Conditions program which allowed for a date-to-date time period instead of night to night.

Act 83 (2022) directed DCF to make emergency housing available through June 30, 2022.

Act 80 (2022) directed DCF to implement the transitional housing program funded through the federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program. The Transitional Housing Program operated from April 1, 2022, through March 31, 2023.

2022 to 2023

Act 3 (2023) appropriated funds to DCF to continue housing certain categories of individuals through June 30, 2023 and to continue housing all other individuals under the AWC policy through May 31, 2023.

DCF planned to restore the pre-pandemic General Assistance Emergency Housing Program rules starting July 1, 2023.

July 1, 2023, a change to eligibility criteria was implemented based on the Governor's executive order which included families with school-aged children up to 19 years of age to be eligible for assistance.

July 1, 2023, additional changes to the eligibility criteria were expanded to include all pregnant individuals and elderly individuals between the age of 60 and 64.

2023 to 2024

Act 81 (2023) created the Emergency Housing Transition Benefit from April 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024. Individuals who were authorized for emergency housing on June 30, 2023, became eligible for the Emergency Transition Housing Benefit also known as the "June Cohort".

March 13, 2024 (BAA) extended housing through June 30, 2024 for the June Cohort and households eligible under regular GA rules, including those who were eligible based on a documented disability/health condition.

Program overview transitioning out of COVID

State Fiscal Year 2024

In person and phone applications were available.

Interview by phone or in-person was offered.

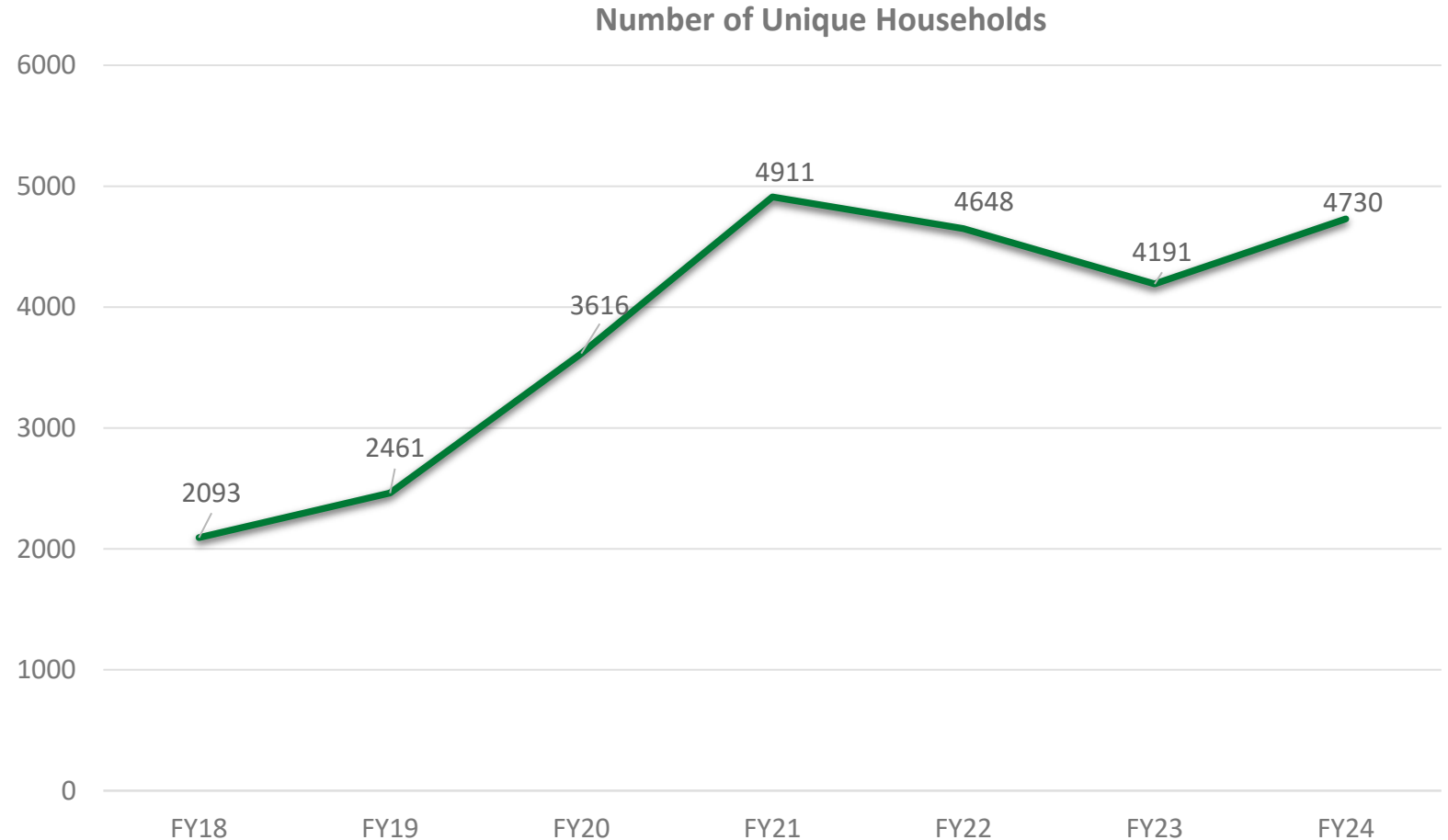
Homelessness was verified.

Eligibility was determined based on categories:

| Catastrophic for a maximum 84 days | June Cohort (July 1, 2023- June 30, 2024) | Vulnerable for a maximum of 28 days | Adverse Weather Conditions (date to date) |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fire, Flood, Death of a Spouse or minor child• Domestic Violence/Sexual Violence• Constructive Eviction - No Cause• Court ordered eviction | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everyone who was eligible under a BAA category and receiving emergency housing assistance on the night of June 30, 2023, was eligible for continued housing assistance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SSI/SSDI Recipient• Age 60• Pregnant• Children under 18 or 19 if still attending school.• Points: Disabled Vet, Open Family Services Case, SSI/SSDI Applicant, discharged from hospital stay, discharged from DCF Custody w/in last 3 years, RU Recipient, Probation or parole | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dependent upon weather November 15th to December 15th and March 15th to April 15th. For many years, AWC was called night-to-night.• Non-weather dependent December 15th to March 15th• Homeless households• Ineligible if refused shelter bed or other alternative housing |

If a shelter bed was available, the applicant was required to accept it and was sent to the shelter for intake.

GA Households Served Annually



Total cost of GA over the years



Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP)

SFY 25 Awards Summary <https://dcf.vermont.gov/oeo/resources/awards> -
Funding to thirty-nine non-profits across Vermont

Funding supports:

- Emergency Shelter (Operations, Essential Services) including Emergency Apartments and Motel Pool
- Homelessness Prevention (Services)
- Rapid Re-housing (Services, Rental Assistance)
- Innovation
- Coordinated Entry Assessment & Navigation (and HUD COC Coordinated Entry)
- Transitional Housing, where shown to be the most effective strategy
- Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
- Flexible Client-Based Financial Assistance

Family Supportive Housing

Helps place households into permanent housing and provides long-term, intensive home-based case management and service coordination for families with complex needs who have experienced homelessness to help them stay housed.

Families are referred through Coordinated Entry. There are 11 community providers (12 AHS districts), approximate capacity up to 465 families currently. Prioritized based on the following factors:

- Families with multiple episodes or a prolonged episode of homelessness
- Families that are open for services (or have active case) with the Family Services Division of DCF.
- Families with at least one child under 6

Lead agencies can be found here:

[Family Supportive Housing \(FSH\)](#) | [Department for Children and Families\(vermont.gov\)](#)

Additional Housing Programs at OEO



New Permanent Supportive Housing Assistance Benefit

Launching in January 2025

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/o eo/programs/psh>



Emergency Rental Assistance Program – Housing Stability Services

Additional covid-era funding for housing services

Sunsets June 2025



HOME Family Housing Voucher Project launched in January 2023 to help families with children exit homelessness.

As of 12/27/24, 152 families have exited homelessness and moved into an apartment with a HOME voucher.

<https://www.cvoeo.org/get-help/home-family-housing-voucher-program>



Landlord Relief Program The funds provide a safeguard for landlords who might be concerned about financial risks associated with tenants renting their units.

<https://landlordrelief.vsha.org/>



Emergency Food & Shelter Program

OEO facilitates the FEMA-funded program that supplements and expands ongoing work of organizations to provide shelter, food, and supportive services to individuals and families who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, hunger and/or homelessness.

<https://www.fema.gov/grants/emergency-food-and-shelter-program>