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## 2024 Annual Report

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As I reflect on 2024, I am struck by the profound impact Vermont Foundation of Recovery (VFOR) has had on so many lives this year. This has been a year of growth, innovation, and meaningful change for our organization and the people we serve. None of this would have been possible without the support of our dedicated staff, generous donors, and committed community partners. Together, we are building stronger foundations for recovery across Vermont.

One of the year's most significant milestones was the opening of The Squire House, the first recovery residence in Bennington, VT. This new residence added nine beds to our network, including six beds for women and three transitional apartment beds for women with children. For the mothers we serve, these beds represent more than just a home—they provide the stability needed to rebuild their lives and care for their families. With the planned addition of 10 new beds in Essex Junction, VT in early 2025, VFOR will have increased its recovery home bed capacity by 40% since September 2024, addressing Vermont's urgent need for recovery housing.

While expanding our housing network is vital, we know that success lies in the details of how we operate. In 2024, we introduced new tools, such as Behave Health and Little Green Light, to enhance data tracking, donor engagement, and operational efficiency. These technologies allow us to be more transparent and effective, ensuring that every effort and every dollar has the greatest possible impact.

To support our growing operations, we also added ten new positions across all departments, including Finance, Membership, Operations, and the newly formed Community Relations Department. These additions reflect our commitment to building a strong infrastructure to sustain our growth and ensure we are meeting the needs of our members and community partners. These new team members have brought fresh perspectives, energy, and expertise to VFOR, helping us strengthen our operations, improve communication, and expand our reach. I am incredibly proud of our entire staff, whose dedication and hard work make our mission possible every day.

Advocacy was another key area of focus this year. Through our partnership with Recovery Partners of Vermont (RPV), we secured increased state funding for our recovery residences. These funds are critical to sustaining our existing programs and expanding services to underserved populations. By advocating for policies that prioritize recovery, we are shaping a future where everyone in Vermont can thrive.

As we look to the year ahead, I am filled with hope and gratitude. The progress we've made in 2024 sets a strong foundation for the work to come, and I am confident that we can continue to make a lasting difference. Thank you for believing in our mission and for helping us bring hope and healing to Vermonters in recovery.

Deepest gratitude,  
David Riegel  
Executive Director  
Vermont Foundation of Recovery



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## MISSION AND VISION

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**Mission:** At Vermont Foundation of Recovery (VFOR), our mission is to create a network of recovery homes to help people suffering from substance use disorder(s) reassimilate into society by supporting the transitions from active use, to recovery, to independent living.

**Vision:** Our vision is that every Vermonter struggling with substance use disorder has ready access to a full spectrum of recovery supports and services. VFOR envisions a future in which it will be able to connect individuals suffering from substance use disorder with services which shepherd them from detoxification, to inpatient treatment, to outpatient counseling, to sober living and employment, and ultimately, to stable sobriety and independent living as valued and productive members of their communities. We envision that these services will be available to anyone who needs them, and that they will be available locally and without delay.

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## 2024 HIGHLIGHTS AND MILESTONES

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2024 was a transformative year for VFOR, marked by key achievements that expanded our capacity, enhanced our infrastructure, and deepened our impact on Vermonters in recovery. Below are some of the most significant milestones from this remarkable year:

### 1. House Expansion:

- a. In November, VFOR opened The Squire House - Bennington Women's Recovery Home, adding nine new beds, including: six beds in a recovery home for women and three transitional beds for women with children.
- b. This expansion added the first recovery home in Bennington, which addressed a critical need for recovery housing in Vermont.
- c. By year-end, the Bennington Recovery Home achieved an occupancy rate of 67.20%.

### 2. Technological Advancements:

- a. Behave Health: Implemented to enhance operations, data reporting, track recovery capital, and provide insights into member outcomes.
- b. Little Green Light: Adopted as a donor management platform to streamline fundraising and engagement efforts.

### 3. New Departments and Staffing:

To support growth and improve operations, VFOR created **one** new department and ten **new** positions:

- a. **Advocacy, Marketing/Communications, and Development Department:** Newly established department created to focus on outreach, advocacy efforts, donor engagement, and organizational visibility. New positions include:
  - Director of Community Relations (Full-Time): Oversees the Community Relations Department, strategic planning, advocacy efforts, and donor relations
  - Community Relations Manager (Full-Time): Manages donor engagement, digital communications, community relations, and marketing efforts
  - Data & Systems Optimization Manager (Full-Time): Manages CRM systems, data analytics, and operational efficiency
- b. **Finance Department:**
  - Finance Manager (Part-Time): Strengthens financial oversight and reporting
  - HR Manager (Full-Time): Focuses on employee retention, performance evaluations, goal setting, and fostering VFOR's organizational culture

**c. Operations Department:**

- Bennington House Coordinator (Part-Time): Supports operations at the newly opened Bennington Women's Recovery Home
- Positions Added but Not Yet Filled: In anticipation of further growth, VFOR created the following additional roles for the Operations Department:
  - Men's Float House Coordinator (Part-Time): Supports operations at various men's recovery residences
  - Women's Float House Coordinator (Part-Time): Supports operations at various women's recovery residences
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Women's Regional Manager (Full-Time): Oversees House Coordinators and women's recovery residences throughout the state

**d. Membership Division:** Expanded the Operations Department to include this dedicated division and added a new leadership role:

- Membership Manager (Full-Time): Manages two Membership Coordinators, member engagement, and community partner relations

**4. Advocacy Achievements:**

As a proud member of Recovery Partners of Vermont (RPV), VFOR contributed to coordinated efforts to advance recovery housing initiatives across the state. To strengthen advocacy, RPV contracted with Action Circles, a professional advocacy firm, to assist in this endeavor. The outcome of these efforts included:

- a. VFOR previously secured \$400,000 in General Fund base dollars and \$226,399 in Federal Fund SAMHSA block grant dollars. This year, we successfully obtained \$1,082,976 in new Opioid Settlement Funds, significantly increasing resources for VFOR's operations, growth, and sustainability goals.
- b. VFOR achieved a major policy breakthrough – a partial two-year exemption to Vermont's landlord-tenant law for certified recovery residences. This exemption allows recovery homes to address return to use and threatening behaviors effectively while maintaining a structured and supportive environment for all members. The exemption highlights progress toward a permanent legislative solution that respects the unique needs of recovery housing.
- c. These advocacy achievements reflect VFOR's leadership and commitment to overcoming funding, policy, and operational challenges, ensuring that recovery housing remains accessible, effective, and sustainable for Vermonters in need.

**5. Strengthening Employee Benefits to Support Retention**

- a. VFOR took a significant step to enhance its employee benefits package by introducing a retirement savings plan with a 3% employer matching contribution after two years of employment.
- b. This benefit, available to employees after six months with the organization, reflects VFOR's commitment to investing in its dedicated team and fostering long-term stability within its workforce.
- c. Providing this retirement plan not only supports the financial well-being of our employees but also aligns with our broader strategy to attract and retain talented professionals in the competitive nonprofit sector.



## 2024 VFOR INDICATORS

Vermont Foundation of Recovery (VFOR) served 136 members both men and women spanning our nine Vermont locations in 2024. Of the members, 88% stayed past our 30-day introductory period and 56% completed their initial 90-day commitment.

As shown in the “**VFOR Current Locations and Bed Capacity Chart**”, the organization operated 69 beds across seven counties in Vermont. With plans to open an additional women’s recovery home and transitional apartment in Essex, VFOR is poised to increase its capacity to 79 beds in 2025, further addressing the critical need for recovery housing.

The “**2024 Key Indicators Chart**” highlights important metrics that reflect VFOR’s impact and areas for growth. Notably, VFOR experienced a 4% increase in occupancy rate, rising from 73% to 77% in 2024. Typically, we see a temporary dip in occupancy when opening a new recovery home as it takes time to fill new beds, but we are excited to achieve an increase despite this trend. Additionally, the number of members served grew from 129 to 136, and the average length of stay rose from 5.46 months to 6 months, indicating stronger engagement and stability among members. The percentage of members who were volunteering or employed also increased from 90% to 92%, showcasing the success of VFOR’s homes in fostering community reintegration and self-sufficiency.

However, challenges remain, as the percentage of members transitioning into stable housing decreased from 56% in 2023 to 47% in 2024, which highlights the pressing need to address Vermont’s housing crisis. These charts and indicators provide a comprehensive overview of VFOR’s achievements and challenges, guiding the organization’s efforts to address systemic barriers and ensure lasting recovery outcomes for its members.

### VFOR CURRENT LOCATIONS & BED CAPACITY

#### RECOVERY HOMES

**VFOR has 9 recovery homes with 56 beds located in:**

1. Barre (Women and Women with Children): 8 Beds
2. Bennington (Women): 6 Beds
3. Essex (Women): 6 Beds
4. Essex 1007 A/B (Men): 6 Beds
5. Essex 1007 C/D (Men): 6 Beds
6. Morrisville (Women): 5 Beds
7. Rutland (Men): 7 Beds
8. St. Albans (Men): 6 Beds
9. St. Johnsbury (Men): 6 Beds

#### TRANSITIONAL APARTMENTS

**VFOR has 8 transitional apartments with 13 beds located in:**

1. Barre (2 Transitional Apartments): 2 Beds
2. Bennington (2 Transitional Apartments): 3 Beds
3. Essex (2 Transitional Apartments): 4 Beds
4. Rutland (1 Transitional Apartment): 2 Beds
5. St. Albans (1 Transitional Apartment): 2 Beds



2024 KEY INDICATORS	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Occupancy	71%	69%	65%	83%	73%	77%
Number of Members	80	89	89	114	129	136
Average Length of Stay (Months)	4.4	4.2	4.3	3.6	5.46	6.00
Percent of Volunteering or Employed	84%	79%	81%	87%	90%	92%
Percent of Members into Stable Housing	N/A	N/A	39%	46%	56%	47%

## BUDGET OVERVIEW

For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, Vermont Foundation of Recovery (VFOR) achieved remarkable progress despite rising operational costs driven by inflation and increased demand for services. By leveraging strategic planning and partnerships to address challenges, expand services, and strengthen our organizational capacity, VFOR successfully managed its budget while expanding its impact.

VFOR ended FY24 with \$1,440,865 in income, achieving 88% of our projected budget. Strategic expense management allowed us to operate at 80% of our budgeted expenditures, spending \$1,021,242 while maintaining high program quality. These efforts resulted in a net operating surplus of \$419,623, exceeding our budgeted surplus by over \$54,000. This surplus positions VFOR for sustainable growth, including filling staffing gaps and investing in key initiatives to meet the rising demand for recovery residences across Vermont.

Key areas of financial focus included maintaining existing recovery homes, preparing for the opening of a new home for women and women with children in Bennington, and enhancing staff support through initiatives such as the addition of a HR manager and a retirement savings plan for VFOR employees. VFOR also invested in technology and infrastructure improvements, including data systems to streamline operations and better track outcomes, ensuring transparency and accountability in all financial decisions.

Funding from the General Assembly and the Opioid Settlement Fund played a crucial role in meeting operational needs, while private donations, grants, and member dues continued to supplement the budget. These funding streams allowed VFOR to balance short-term priorities with long-term sustainability goals.

Looking ahead, VFOR remains committed to diversifying funding and addressing financial challenges, such as rising costs for rent, utilities, health insurance, and staffing, while advocating for additional funding to support future growth. With careful planning and focus on impact, VFOR is well-positioned to meet the evolving needs of its members and the communities it serves.



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## COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

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In 2024, the Vermont Alliance for Recovery Residences (VTARR), the certifying body for VFOR and an affiliate of the National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR), made significant strides in assessing and improving Vermont's recovery housing landscape.

As part of these efforts, VTARR contracted the Fletcher Group, a nationally recognized organization specializing in rural recovery housing solutions, to gather critical data on recovery housing supply, demand, and outcomes across the state. This collaboration, which included VFOR working closely with the Fletcher Group, aims to enhance data-driven decision-making and strengthen the recovery infrastructure in Vermont.

According to preliminary findings using the Fletcher Group Economic Calculator, VFOR generates an incredible return on investment of **\$12** for every **\$1** invested.

Over the next 15 years, this means **\$531 million** in total benefits for the state of Vermont, including:

- **\$16.9 million in avoided criminal justice costs**
- **\$27.9 million in avoided healthcare costs**
- **\$52.7 million in avoided productivity losses**
- **\$433.6 million from reduced premature mortality and morbidity**

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## SUCCESS STORIES

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At VFOR, success is measured not just in numbers but in the lives transformed within our recovery residences. Everyone who walks through our doors carries a unique story of courage, perseverance, and hope. This section highlights some of these inspiring journeys – stories of individuals who have embraced recovery and rebuilt their lives. Their achievements underscore the vital role of safe, supportive environments in fostering lasting change.

### Josh's Journey: From Member to Staff Member

Josh's journey with Vermont Foundation of Recovery (VFOR) is one of transformation, resilience, and dedication. Once a member navigating his own path to recovery, Josh is now the House Coordinator for two of VFOR's men's recovery homes in Essex. His story reflects the powerful role VFOR plays in bridging the gaps for individuals transitioning from addiction to stability.

Josh first came to VFOR after struggling with an addiction that left him homeless for nearly three years. Living on the streets of Burlington, Vermont, Josh hit rock bottom. Repeated stints in jail and rehab only reinforced the cycle of despair until a pivotal moment in a solitary jail cell sparked a spiritual awakening. "I saw the path I was going down, and I didn't like it at all," Josh recalls. Determined to change, he committed himself to sobriety and the hard work of rebuilding his life.

When Josh joined VFOR, he found more than a place to live—he found a community that held him accountable while providing structure, routine, and the support needed to succeed. "The structure here is key," Josh explains. "VFOR's guidelines create discipline and give you the tools to recreate yourself. It's not easy, but it's worth it."

Josh's commitment to recovery didn't go unnoticed. After transitioning to VFOR's transitional apartments, an intermediary step for members moving toward independence, he was approached by VFOR's Director of Operations with an opportunity to join the team. Today, as House Coordinator, Josh helps others navigate the challenges he once faced, fostering accountability, structure, and fellowship within the homes.



Despite VFOR's impact, Josh sees the challenges that remain. "There's always a waiting list, at least 10 people deep, just for one house," he says. The demand for recovery beds far exceeds availability, leaving many without the support they need. "VFOR is expanding rapidly, but we need more beds, more staff, and more resources to help everyone on that waiting list recreate their lives like I did."

Josh's story is a testament to the life-changing work of VFOR and the critical need for more resources to expand its reach. "The goal is to help everyone who comes through these doors," he says. For him, success isn't just about staying substance-free—it's about rebuilding a life with purpose, accountability, and community. "I've seen it work, and I'm living proof."

### **Carrie's Journey: A Story of Resilience and Renewal**

After years of heavy drinking, Carrie's health deteriorated severely. She recalls, "My eyes started getting yellow, my stomach was bloated with fluid up to the bottom of my heart, and I started having trouble breathing." Doctors diagnosed her with cirrhosis of the liver and gave her a 16% chance of survival, prompting her family to gather at the hospital, fearing she wouldn't make it through the night.

Determined to change, Carrie quit drinking on April 1, 2024 and spent two and a half weeks in the hospital. Upon discharge, she committed to sobriety and entered a two-week program at Valley Vista. However, upon completion, she found herself homeless with nowhere to go. That's when the Vermont Foundation of Recovery (VFOR) accepted her application.

On May 2nd, Carrie moved into the Morrisville house. Shortly after, she requested a transfer to The Barre Foundation recovery home to be closer to her family. She explained, "I wanted to move to Barre to be closer to my kids because nothing is more important than family."

Initially apprehensive about recovery, Carrie found immense support at The Barre Foundation house and from VFOR. She says, "I got a lot of support as a member of VFOR—I have not relapsed." With their help, Carrie recently received a promotion at her job with ReSource and is preparing to move into VFOR's transitional apartment in Barre. This new living environment will offer her more independence while still receiving the benefits of VFOR membership. Reflecting on her progress, she says, "Things are going incredibly well; I couldn't have done it without the accountability, support, and security from VFOR. I was able to re-find myself."

Throughout her recovery, Carrie's youngest daughter, now 20, has been her rock, accompanying her to the ER and offering unwavering support. Their bond has strengthened, and Carrie cherishes having all four of her daughters back in her life. She shares, "When you come from a point where you think you're going to die—it's a gift every day when I wake up."

Looking ahead, Carrie is determined to give back. She has a recovery coach through Turning Point and plans to become a recovery coach herself. She aims to regain her driver's license, secure her own place and a car, and is enrolling in small business management courses through the Community College of Vermont, along with a computer certification class.

Expressing gratitude, Carrie says, "I love Tanya, Mollie, Andrew, and all the VFOR staff—it's been wonderful having their support when I needed it the most." With her daughters back in her life and a clear perspective, she concludes, "Don't take anything for granted."



### **Angelica's Journey: Rebuilding Life with VFOR**

When Angelica arrived at Vermont Foundation of Recovery's Essex Women's Recovery Home, she was in a state of uncertainty, with no job, no car, and no stable foundation. A lapse after over a year of sobriety had left her feeling lost, and she was searching for a way to regain her footing. What she found at VFOR was more than just a place to stay—it was a pathway to reclaiming her life.

Angelica's journey to VFOR began after a difficult period in her life. Originally from Berkshire County, Massachusetts, she had faced challenges including domestic violence, alcoholism, and time in jail. After completing a residential treatment program, a relapse brought her to a critical decision point. Searching online for sober living options, she was drawn to VFOR's mission of building a foundation for recovery. From her first phone call with a VFOR staff member, she felt welcomed and supported.

The transition wasn't easy. Angelica recalls the overwhelming expectations of early sobriety: navigating therapy, finding a job, and meeting VFOR's guidelines. "When I moved in, I didn't know how I was going to do it all," she said. But the structure and support at VFOR gave her the tools she needed. With the encouragement of her peers and the guidance of VFOR's policies, she found a job, purchased a new SUV, and began working toward her long-term goals, including regaining custody of her children and pursuing a master's degree.

One of the most impactful aspects of Angelica's experience was the sense of community and accountability within the VFOR house. Members are encouraged to support one another while holding each other accountable to the guidelines that foster recovery. This balance of independence and structure, she said, was pivotal: "It's almost like having your own recovery coach in the house. The guidelines set the tone for success."

Angelica also found strength in her connection to her children. Regular video chats and visits reassured them that their mom was rebuilding her life in a safe and supportive environment. "When they visited, they saw it was a home, not just a place I was staying. It gave them a sense of security," she said.

Now, Angelica is looking ahead to the future. She's working on establishing a permanent home, continuing her education, and building a stable life for herself and her children. She's deeply grateful for the donors who made her time at VFOR possible, providing a cushion that allowed her to focus on recovery without immediate financial stress. Inspired by the generosity she received, Angelica is committed to giving back so others can have the same opportunity.

Reflecting on her journey, Angelica credits VFOR's structure and support with her transformation. "VFOR gave me the foundation I needed to rebuild my life," she said. "Without it, I don't know if I'd still be sober."