

* * * Vermont Rental Assistance Bridge Program * * *

Sec. 11. VERMONT RENTAL ASSISTANCE BRIDGE PROGRAM

(a) The Vermont Rental Assistance Bridge Program is established within the Vermont State Housing Authority for the purpose of linking households who require rental assistance to permanent housing when the household does not otherwise have access to relevant U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development rental assistance. The Program shall be accessible to eligible clients served by each of the Agency of Human Services' departments.

~~(b) The Program shall be available to a household for not more than 24 months and shall not provide the full amount of the household's rental payment. The Program shall not provide the full amount of the household's rental payment and shall not be a permanent voucher. The duration of Program assistance shall be temporary and determined based on the specific needs of eligible clients, as established by the Agency of Human Services and the Vermont State Housing Authority pursuant to subsection (d) of this section. Program payments shall be made directly from the Vermont State Housing Authority to a household's landlord.~~

~~(c) Program priority shall be given to current recipients of the HOME Program, established pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 321(b)(2), who have not yet reached 24 months of rental assistance. The Program shall be accessible to eligible clients served by each of the Agency of Human Services' departments, with priority given to those exiting homelessness.~~

(d) The Vermont State Housing Authority and relevant departments of the Agency of Human Services shall jointly work to develop a plan that:

(1) incorporates ~~any~~ existing rental assistance for Vermonters exiting homelessness funded by the Agency and its departments into the Program established in this section; and

(2) establish eligibility criteria ~~and~~, any prioritization that may be necessary for this use of funds appropriated for this Program, and the appropriate length of bridge assistance.

(e) The Agency of Human Services shall collaborate with the Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) to develop a framework for establishing a unified housing voucher program that consolidates voucher assistance currently provided through the Agency's departments. In developing this framework, the Agency and VSHA shall:

(1) analyze the fiscal implications of consolidating existing voucher programs into a unified program, including projected costs, potential efficiencies, and impacts on funding sources;

(2) assess the projected impact on the total number of individuals served and on distinct populations, including but not limited to:

(A) individuals exiting homelessness;

(B) individuals facing eviction;

(C) individuals with mental health disorders;

(D) individuals with disabilities; and

(E) any other populations currently served by department-administered voucher programs;

(3) identify administrative, operational, and statutory changes required to implement a unified program; and

(4) propose options and recommendations for the structure, governance, and implementation of the unified program.

The Agency of Human Services and the Vermont State Housing Authority shall report their findings and recommendations to the relevant legislative committees on or before January 15, 2027.

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