
**Report to
The Vermont General Assembly**

**Development of Emergency Shelter and Permanent Supportive Housing
Capacity Pursuant to Act 113 (H.883)**

In Accordance with Act 113 of 2024 (H.883)

Submitted to: Joint Fiscal Committee

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Department for Children and Families

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Report Date: September 1, 2024

Legislative Charge

This report is submitted in accordance with Act 113 of 2024 (H.883) Sec. E321.1(b)(2) and in fulfillment of the requirement for the Department for Children and Families (DCF) to submit a report by September 1, 2024 to the Joint Fiscal Committee on the plan to continue to develop emergency shelters for the provision of lodging between December 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025 to households that do not meet the eligibility criteria for General Assistance (GA)

Emergency Housing:

“The Department shall continue to develop emergency shelters for the provision of lodging between December 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025 to households that do not meet the eligibility criteria ... or are otherwise in need of emergency shelter.”

“In fiscal year 2025, \$10,000,000 allocated from the General Fund in Sec. B 1102(b)(9) of this act to expand shelter bed and permanent supportive housing shall be used by the Department to first develop emergency shelters as required in subsection (a) of this section. Any allocated funds that are not needed for emergency shelters may be used to expand permanent shelter bed and permanent supportive housing capacity.”

Executive Summary

The Department for Children and Families (DCF) is continuing to develop emergency shelter capacity to serve households. DCF issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity to continue the development of emergency shelters on May 31, 2024, and by the deadline of July 10 received fourteen applications totaling \$34,925,732. DCF reviewed and prioritized applications and is in the process of issuing awards on a rolling basis. DCF will closely monitor progress and provide an update to the Joint Fiscal Committee by November 1, 2024.

Background & Review

Over the past year, emergency shelter capacity has increased. In September 2023, the state-funded emergency shelter household capacity totaled 436. As of today, there is capacity for 536 households. Capacity will continue to grow in the year ahead.¹

Vermont has a network of shelter providers, engaged community organizations, and strong cities and towns familiar with their local housing needs and well-positioned to address them. DCF supports the development of local, customized solutions to the housing and homelessness challenges faced by each community. On May 31, 2024, DCF issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity to expand shelter bed and permanent supportive housing capacity across Vermont, reaching out to providers and municipal partners to invite projects that could create emergency shelter capacity for the winter of 2024-2025. In addition to the public release the Notice was also specifically distributed to the Chittenden County Homelessness Alliance and the Housing and Homelessness Alliance of Vermont, the League of Cities & Towns, the

¹ Housing Opportunity Grant Program Award Summaries
<https://dcf.vermont.gov/oeo/resources/awards>.

Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, Vermont Housing Finance Agency, Agency of Human Services Field Services Directors, and more. DCF’s Office of Economic Opportunity hosted an online overview of the Notice on June 4, 2024, and office hours on June 13, 2024, and July 2, 2024. AHS and DCF leadership also arranged calls with several of the most heavily impacted communities to emphasize the intent of the legislation and funding and the need for shelter capacity on December 1, and to answer questions. Applications were due July 10, 2024, in order to comply with the intent of the legislation to create as much new shelter capacity by December 2024. In total, DCF received fourteen applications totaling \$34,925,732. The applications represent communities in seven counties.

Summary of Applications

The review committee met in mid-July and included members from DCF, the AHS Secretary’s Office, AHS Field Services, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, Vermont Housing Finance Agency, and the Department of Housing and Community Development. Of the fourteen applications, a subset did not meet the intent of the legislation, and a subset would not be operational until winter 2025-2026 or later in 2026.

The committee prioritized six applications based on the following criteria: eligibility of the proposed activities, ability to meet the needs of the local community, experience of the applicant, program design, and the ability to create capacity as quickly as possible. These six applications would create capacity for approximately an additional 99 households, or 105 beds, with permanent capacity for approximately 86 beds:

Emergency Shelter Capacity:

- Year-Round Shelter – Operates on an ongoing basis throughout the year.
- Seasonal Shelter – Operates only during specific seasons, most often through with cold weather, year to year.

| County | Provider(s) | Year-Round Shelter Opening in Winter 2024-2025 | Seasonal Winter 2024-2025 Shelter |
|---------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Chittenden County | TBD (two applicants for the same property) | TBD | TBD |
| Franklin County Project 1 | Champlain Housing Trust & CVOEO Voices Against Violence | 9 households = 15 beds | N/A |
| Franklin County Project 2 | Champlain Housing Trust & Spectrum Youth Services | 10 beds/households | N/A |
| Rutland County | Rutland Housing Trust | 21 beds/households ² | N/A |

² 21 rooms that may be divided up between capacity for individuals and households with multiple family members and may create more bed capacity.

| County | Provider(s) | Year-Round Shelter Opening in Winter 2024-2025 | Seasonal Winter 2024-2025 Shelter |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Washington County | Good Samaritan Haven | N/A | 5 beds/households |
| Windsor County ³ | Upper Valley Haven | N/A | 5 beds/households ⁴ |

CF is in the process of finalizing proposals with these six applicants and issuing awards on a rolling basis. Many of the proposals involve real estate transactions, local permitting processes, and the need for ongoing community outreach, all of which will take time and discretion due to the sensitive nature of real estate acquisition, shelter siting and the active awards process. DCF, or the project sponsors themselves, will make more information public as soon as we/they are able.

The projects aim to become operational during the winter of 2024-2025. The seasonal shelters do not require property acquisition and may be available as early as October and November of 2024. The new year-round shelters require property acquisition and development and are expected to be online in December or January, but delays would not be unexpected given the nature of real estate and development projects as well as the workforce challenges associated with launching a new program. The total application costs for these projects totals \$11,556,694. The Department is in the process of negotiating costs to finalize budgets. The Department can utilize base funding from the Housing Opportunity Grant Program to help address a portion of operational costs requested through this process. The Department is also working with Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to explore opportunities to leverage funding.

The shelter capacity developed under these proposals are an important investment in Vermont’s emergency shelter network in both the short and long term. The Notice of Funding and associated outreach efforts were intentional and specific about the goals for the funding, with the priority for emergency shelter on December 1, 2024. This approach will allow these shelters to be operational during the winter of 2024-2025. Consideration was given to re-issuing the RFP to identify new or different opportunities. Timing, cost, and the legislative mandate for operations to begin this winter made this option unfeasible in light of these shared goals. These projects reflect the average, or lower, costs of investing in this type of work and the Department is grateful for the work done by the applicants to develop these projects.

Next Steps

DCF will provide an update on November 1, 2024, with more detail, “...addressing the Department’s efforts to develop sufficient emergency shelter beds, including updates on work to provide overnight shelter and daytime solutions in advance of December 1, 2024.” Act 133 (2024), Sec. E.321.1(b)(2).

⁴ This is a joint Vermont and New Hampshire project. The funds support approximately 5 beds of a 14 bed projects in NH based on projected utilization of Vermonters.