

Vermont Agency of Human Services  
Department of Corrections  
**Correctional Facilities - Preventing Homelessness at Discharge**

---

## **PURPOSE**

To support and implement, to the maximum extent practicable and where appropriate, policies and protocols for the discharge of persons from **State Correctional Facilities** in order to prevent such discharge from immediately resulting in homelessness; to clarify practices and procedures to promote greater housing stability for all persons served by the system of care.

## **MISSION**

*“No AHS program or service can achieve its goals for clients if those clients are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The highest priority for AHS housing efforts is to end homelessness in Vermont. All departments shall be attuned to the housing needs of clients and ensure that their programs support housing stability.” – AHS Policy on Housing Stability*

To help reduce the incidence of homelessness in Vermont, the Department of Corrections has developed the following policies, procedures, programs and services to support people successfully transitioning from correctional facilities to the community.

## **DEFINITIONS**

The terms *Homeless* and *At Risk of Homelessness* are defined in the Vermont Agency of Human Services Housing Stability Policy. In general, an individual exiting a publicly-funded institution or system of care is deemed At Risk of Homelessness if their annual income is below 30% of county median and they lack sufficient resources or support networks to prevent them moving to an emergency shelter, the street, or another place not meant for human habitation.

*Conditional Re-entry/Furlough* is defined as “an extension of the limits of confinement of an inmate to locations outside a correctional facility by which a sentenced offender is released to the community under supervision at or beyond their minimum release date.”

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

All inmates and offenders supervised in the community are required to participate in the development of an Offender Case Plan (OCP) which outlines his/her areas of need and risk. The document changes to reflect the offender's progress and challenges. (Directive #371.05, Offender Case Planning)

All inmates serving six months or more in a facility must begin working on a Transition Plan at least 180 days prior to the anticipated release date. Sex offenders, offenders with Significant Functional Impairment (SFI), and other persons with complicated cases begin transition planning one year prior to release. (Directive #371.02, Facility Case Management)

While appropriate community housing is an important consideration in release of offenders, the Department of Corrections shall not use lack of permanent housing as the **sole** factor in denying furlough to offenders who have served at least their minimum sentence for a nonviolent misdemeanor or nonviolent felony provided that public safety and the best interests of the offender will be served by reentering the community on furlough. Whenever possible, DOC will make an effort to avoid releasing an offender directly to homelessness. (Directive #371.14, Furlough Residence Approval)

Status: *Implemented*

## **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

DOC funds over 325 transitional housing beds statewide which serve offenders reentering the community from incarceration. Transitional sites also provide a variety of services meant to prepare participants for independent living.

DOC grant-funded Housing Specialists provide housing search and retention services to returning offenders.

DOC budgets \$120,000 annually for Release Money for housing which can fund security deposits and short term rental assistance for offenders returning to the community from incarceration. (Directive #323.01)

Status: *Implemented*

## **EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVENESS**

As Vermont's homeless Continuum of Care implement systems for coordinated intake and assessment, the Agency of Human Services and local Continuum will seek to incorporate an evaluation of the effectiveness of homeless discharge planning for various systems of care into the standard client intake.

Status: *In Development*

## **COMPLIANCE AND MONITORING**

Overall responsibility for ensuring compliance with the above policies or procedures rests with the department. To ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach, the Agency of Human Services Secretary's Office may provide individual departments with direction, support and consultation as needed. Additionally, the Governor's Council on Homelessness may provide feedback on these policies or procedures and their effectiveness in preventing routine discharge to homelessness.