



Ending Family Homelessness 2020

Vermont Quarterly Implementation Update (*October 2015*)



Adopt the national “*Family Connection*” framework to ensure local communities have a coordinated system for assessing families’ housing needs and connecting them to the appropriate housing, benefits, employment supports, and evidence-based intervention the first time.

- A Coordinated Entry Committee of the Continuum of Care and Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) have developed: a Coordinated Entry template; a screening tool; and a housing barriers assessment tool.
- The Office of Economic Opportunity began funding Coordinated Entry and Assessment activities through its new, consolidated Housing and Opportunity Program (HOP) grants.
- Coordinated Entry and Assessment began in Rutland and Washington Counties in July of 2015 with Capstone Community Action and the Homeless Prevention Center the identified local lead agencies.
- The National Alliance to End Homelessness has provided an initial Vermont training on incorporating best practices in Rapid Re-Housing. Additional training and self-assessments are being explored by the state.
- The Department for Children and Families is supporting creation of emergency shelter and transitional “crisis beds” in underserved regions by allowing communities greater flexibility with General Assistance funding.
- AHS workgroups have identified potential barriers to homeless families accessing employment, employment supports, and early learning and development programs, and have identified solutions to explore through policy and collaborative work with local homeless Continuum of Care.
- An AHS workgroup is identifying materials and training opportunities to support a consistent trauma-informed approach among providers working with homeless families.

Braid supportive services, housing, and rental assistance to improve stability for families, children, landlords and communities.

- The VT State Housing Authority (VSHA) has created a local Supportive Housing preference prioritizing section 8 rental vouchers for homeless families receiving intensive case management. This preference is scheduled to go into effect October 1, 2015 and will serve 100 formerly homeless families in supportive housing programs.
- The Agency of Human Services is exploring expansion of its Family Supportive Housing programming to all districts to better reach homeless families with the highest needs.

Construct and rehabilitate rental housing which is affordable to households with extremely low incomes, and accessible to families and individuals who have experienced homelessness.

- The Joint Committee on Tax Credits updated the state’s Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) in August, creating a new incentive for developers who create Supportive Housing units for homeless households.
- The Consolidated Plan Advisory Group and Dept. of Housing & Community Development set five-year targets for construction of housing for people experiencing homelessness in Vermont’s new 2016-2020 Consolidated Plan.
- The Vermont Housing Finance Agency has received support for a first-time home-buyer assistance program.
- A cross-agency work group is exploring viability of a loan and technical assistance program to encourage smaller landlords to bring vacant units online and up to code while maintaining stable rents.



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- Personal Narratives from Families Overcoming Homelessness -

Hard Work and Responsibility Pay Off

A two-parent family with three children were living in an emergency homeless shelter and working hard on their high school diplomas while participating in Reach Up. They kept their children up to date on their well child visits, received a Vermont Rental Subsidy and were saving towards an apartment in the town where the daughter was receiving services she needed to succeed in school. Mom and Dad explained that *“Hard work and responsibility pay off. If you put your mind to it, you can do it. We were not able to save money before.”* In September, the family had saved over \$2,000, enough for a rental deposit, and was moving to an apartment in the school district of their choice.

Claire’s Story

Claire is a mother of three, with two children under six years old. She admitted she was at risk of losing her children because she struggled with addiction. She was also a victim of domestic violence, which left her feeling she had no control. Claire did not take the program seriously at first. She turned the corner after a year in the Family Supportive Housing program and was happy to be living in an apartment with all her children, working, and looking at completing her degree. *“My kids and I are happy. I am coming into myself as an individual in all aspects and being more comfortable with myself. They don’t just do housing. They support life goals, work situations, and are a huge support system in life in general.”*

Sean’s Story

Sean is the father of a child under six. He said he ended up homeless and in need of help because of his drug use. It was difficult and stressful for him to bring his child, who was two years old at the time, to wait all day in an office to fill out forms for one night’s stay in emergency housing at a hotel or motel. He explains that, *“By working with the right workers at the time, I learned how to build finances and maintain bill paying.”*

- Recent Highlights and Milestones -

- **Subsidies** - In the six months since Vermont launched Ending Family Homelessness 2020, 71 families (102 adults and 140 kids) moved from shelters and motels into safe, affordable housing with a DCF Vermont Rental Subsidy.
- **Services** - By June 30th, 91 families (121 adults and their 176 children) who had struggled with homelessness and other challenges were stabilized in affordable housing and receiving intensive on-site services and supports through one of OEO’s five Family Supportive Housing demonstration pilots.
- **Decline in Homelessness** – For the first time in five years, Vermont recorded a decrease in the number of people experiencing homelessness. While only a modest 2% change across all demographics, HUD’s 2015 Point-In-Time count found a more statistically-significant 17% reduction in the number of Vermont kids who are homeless.

Additional Information on Vermont’s Goal and Strategy for Ending Family Homelessness 2020 Available at:

humanservices.vermont.gov/end-family-homelessness