



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

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To: Chittenden County Homeless Alliance Steering Committee

From: Sarah Russell, Special Asst. to End Homelessness, CEDO; Co-Chair, Chittenden County Homeless Alliance

Date: July 24, 2024

Subject: July 2024 General Assistance Emergency Housing Program Task Force Report

Background:

[Act 113](#) created the General Assistance Emergency Housing (GA-EH) Task Force to provide recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the statewide and local operation and administration of the General Assistance Emergency Housing benefit. The Task Force shall examine and provide recommendations on the following:

1. Household eligibility; maximum days of eligibility; application, notice, and appeals processes; participant requirements; and annual reporting requirements;
2. The process to establish a single, statewide, unified coordinated entry system with participation from the Department;
3. The current organization of roles and responsibilities within the Department for Children and Families' Office of Economic Opportunity and the Division of Economic Services;
4. the number and types of emergency shelter spaces needed and currently available for each geographic region in the State, with a preference for non-congregate shelter spaces;
5. The identification of a consistent lead agency for each geographic region;
6. The identification of role and responsibility assigned to the lead agency;
7. Potential adjustments to emergency housing policy during cold weather months;
8. A process to enable participating households to place a percentage of the household's gross income into savings, which shall be returned to the household for permanent housing expenses when the household exits the General Assistance Emergency Housing;
9. A mechanism for addressing potential conduct challenges posed by a member of a participating household served in a motel, hotel, or shelter;
10. The identification of any State rules and local regulations and ordinances that are impeding the timely development of safe, decent, affordable housing in Vermont communities in order to:
 - a) Identify areas in which flexibility or discretion are available; and

- b) Advise whether the temporary suspension of relevant State rules and local regulations and ordinances, or the adoption or amendment of State rules, would facilitate faster and less costly revitalization of existing housing and construction of new housing units;
11. A mechanism to ensure that eligible households are sheltered until transitional or permanent housing is available; and
12. Strategies to reduce reliance on hotels and motels for emergency housing.

Meeting no less than eight (8) times prior to final report submission by January 15, 2025, the Task Force is comprised of the following members:

Miranda Gray, Deputy Commissioner, Economic Services Division, Department for Children and Families

Lily Sojourner, Director, Office of Economic Opportunity, Department for Children and Families
(Appointed by DCF's Commissioner)

Elizabeth Gilman, Executive Director, United Way and Vermont 211

Molly Dugan, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, Cathedral Square - Rep for Long-Term Care Crisis Coalition

Brenda Siegel, Director of End Homelessness Vermont - Rep for Vermont Center for Independent Living

Frank Knaack, Executive Director, Housing and Homeless Alliance of Vermont

Amy Johnson, Government Affairs and Communications Director, Vermont Care Partners

Jubilee McGill, House Human Services Representative (member with lived experience)

Sarah Russell, Special Assistant to End Homelessness, City of Burlington and Co-Chair of the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance (member with experience operating an emergency shelter)

Shaun Gilpin, Housing Division Director, Agency of Commerce and Community Development (Appointed by ACCD's Commissioner)

Pollaidh Major, Director of Policy and Special Projects, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board

Shelby Lebaron (Member with lived experience)

One (1) additional member is still to be determined

Report:

The GA-HP Task Force met for its first meeting on July 16, 2024 to map a plan of action for its work. During this meeting, Jubilee McGill and Sarah Russell were nominated and approved to co-chair. The group determined information necessary to provide all members with a baseline level of knowledge about the following:

- Pre- and post-COVID General Assistance Emergency Housing Program overview
- Overview of the Coordinated Entry System
- Service provider perspective

Presentations will be scheduled for the above learning for the next GA-EH Task Force meeting.

During this initial meeting, the group heard from a former person with lived experience who shared how they came to be eligible for the EH program and some of the challenges they experienced navigating this system.

Moving forward, the GA-EH Task Force will meet approximately every three weeks to develop recommendations from the duties assigned. Each meeting will allow for a 15-20 minute public comment session. Meetings are open to the public; dates, times, agendas, and minutes will be posted on the [Department of Children and Families website](#).

Members of the public who are unable to join the public comment sessions should submit written public comment to Sarah Russell (srussell@burlingtonvt.gov) and Jubilee McGill (JMcGill@leg.state.vt.us).