



Economic Services Division Community Meeting

**Presented by: Miranda Gray, Deputy Commissioner,
Economic Services Division, DCF**

Economic Services' Mission and Vision

Our mission:

To provide high quality service while administering programs to improve economic well-being for Vermonters.

Our vision:

Vermonters thrive with a sense of independence and connection to their communities.

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/esd>

3SquaresVT

Federal Government Shutdown Wrap Up

Emergency state benefit issued on November 7 covering first 15 days of the month

Federal government reopened on November 13 and full federal benefits were issued on November 14

No countable months for November 2025 for anyone with the time-limited benefit work requirement

Continuing resolution fully funds SNAP through September 30, 2026



SNAP in the News

Multiple news stories recently promising big structural changes to the SNAP program

States have not been given any specific instructions or concrete information about what these changes may be

In the event we do receive reliable information, we will communicate that out

3SquaresVT Eligibility for Certain Non- Citizens

New Federal Guidance Received Last Week

The United States Department of Agriculture released new guidance last week on 12/9 and 12/10 that differed from previous guidance issued on 10/31

New federal Q&A document provides eligibility for certain lawful permanent residents in the US for less than 5 years

ESD is working now to restore eligibility for previously closed individuals (current estimate is about 90 people)

3SquaresVT

Work Requirements Update

Vermont's 3-year clock reset on November 1 giving all individuals with the work requirement three new "free" months

Due to the shutdown, no countable months for November – countable months start in December

Because of the changes in HR1, many more individuals have a work requirement

Reminder about the personal obstacle or barrier exemption available and community partner role

[page 2 of the ESD form 210A](#) and [VT work rules website](#)

Happy Birthday, 3SquaresVT in a SNAP!

Demonstration project launched October 1, 2020. 3SNAP just turned 5 years old!

Goal is to increase participation of older Vermonters and those with disabilities

Shorter, easier application with a longer certification period of 3 years (regular app is 15 pages and 46 questions while the 3SNAP app is 4 pages and 15 questions)

Eligible households are those where everyone is at 60 years old or receiving disability benefits and no one has earned income from a job or self-employment

These households have a dedicated caseworker and access to their direct line

Currently 43% of the 3SquaresVT population is 3SquaresVT in a SNAP



ESD Call Center

The ESD Call Center oversees all ESD phone lines, with the exception of the General Assistance Housing lines.

ESD Call Center number is: 1-800-479-6151

ESD Interview line number is: 1-877-403-7668

Reach Up case management meeting using Amazon Connect

Reach Up has changed how we are connecting with families over the phone.

Data shows that over 80% of our communication with participants is by phone.

In July we began transitioning phone meetings to a recorded system called Amazon Connect.

Implementing the Amazon Connect platform allows the RU program to strengthen communication, service delivery and program oversight.

The platform enables the recording of calls for training and quality assurance purposes, providing supervisors and staff with opportunities to review interactions, reinforce best practice, and identify areas for improvement.

The Reach Up program follows strict confidentiality protocols, and recordings, like all case records, are securely stored, access-limited, and used only for appropriate, defined purposes.

Reach Up case management meeting for participants in Emergency Housing

Since July 2025, Reach Up Case Managers have met weekly with households receiving Reach Up and connected to Emergency Housing to further overcome barriers to housing.

The goal of the week meetings is to support families

- brainstorm alternate housing solutions to General Assistance
- complete housing applications for subsidized housing, obtain documents necessary for a successful application, take steps to improve their finances
- Improve their rental resume
- Overcome obstacles

Weekly meetings are held in person at the hotel or an alternative location in some circumstances.

Heating and Utility Assistance Programs

- Federal Fiscal Year 2026 funding has come through. President Trump signed the CR, then they released 90% of the LIHEAP funding to states. Details. These funds will be used to pay back the funds we got from the Legislature, but will also be used for Weatherization, Furnace repair and replacement, Fuel tank repair and replacement. Crisis Fuel Benefits and the administration of the program.
- Crisis Fuel programs through the 5 Community Action Agencies (BROC, CAPSTONE, CVOEO, NEKCA, and SEVCA) as they started 11/24/25.
- Afterhours Crisis Fuel was run by Capstone for many years, and we have recently taken it back on in house. We are still working to fine tune the details.

General Assistance Emergency Housing 12/1/2025 to 3/31/2026

- Emergency Housing winter housing eligibility criteria was established by Act 27, unlike in previous years.
 - Previously, winter housing eligibility criteria was established by memorandum.
- Under Act 27, eligibility criteria for Emergency Housing changed on December 1, 2025.

General Assistance Emergency Housing 12/1/2025 to 3/31/2026

What has not changed:

- Households must attest to lack of a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence
- Households must not have access to an alternative housing placement

Households must include a member who:

- Is 65 years or older;
- Is disabled;
- Is a child 19 years or under;
- Is pregnant;
- Has experienced the death of a spouse, domestic partner, or minor child that caused the household to lose its housing;
- Has experienced a natural disaster;
- Is under court-ordered or constructive eviction; or
- Has experienced domestic violence or other dangerous conditions or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a household member that caused the household to lose its housing.

General Assistance Emergency Housing 12/1/2025 to 3/31/2026

What has not changed:

- Other Emergency Housing rules still apply:
 - Income Contribution
 - Period of Ineligibility
 - Housing tasks
 - \$80 maximum room rate
 - Shelter first

General Assistance Emergency Housing 12/1/2025 to 3/31/2026

What is different:

- The 80-night maximum is not in effect.
- The 1,100-room cap is not in effect.
- Nights used from 12/1/25 – 3/31/26 do not count towards a household's 80 night maximum in a year.

Stay Connected

Sign up to join our listserv to receive meeting invites and updates about ESD programs:

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/newsletter>

Questions?

Please raise your virtual hand, or type your question in the chat

Next Meeting: March 2026

Thank you for joining us!

Stay Connected

Have a question to a presenter, please contact them at:

Miranda Gray, Economic Services Deputy Commissioner
Miranda.Gray@vermont.gov Tel: 802-498-3793

Leslie Wisdom, Food and Nutrition Program Director
Leslie.Wisdom@vermont.gov Tel: 802-585-4852

Paul Madden, ESD Call Center Director
Paul.Madden@vermont.gov Tel: 802-279-4070

Melissa Bocash, Reach Up Director
Melissa.Bocash@vermont.gov Tel: 802-489-3764

Richard Giddings, Heating & Utility Assistance Programs Director
Richard.Giddings@vermont.gov Tel: 802-786-5986

Mark Eley, General Assistance Program Director
Mark.Eley@vermont.gov Tel: 802-760-8833

Stay Connected

ESD District Directors:

Melinda (Mindi) Bussino for Springfield and Brattleboro offices

Email: Melinda.Bussino@vermont.gov Phone: 802-257-2561

Kathleen Smith for Barre and Morrisville offices

Email: Kathleen.D.Smith@vermont.gov Phone: 802-735-6043

Jessica Holmes for Burlington and Middlebury offices

Email: jessica.holmes@vermont.gov Phone: 802-585-5186

Laurie Pion for St Albans and Newport offices

Email: Laurine.Pion@vermont.gov Phone: 802-798-9578

Julie Mazzariello for St Johnsbury and Hartford

offices. Email: Julie.Mazzariello@vermont.gov Phone: 802-585-6486

Sarah Butterfield for Bennington and Rutland offices

Email: Sarah.R.Butterfield@vermont.gov Phone: 802-585-6550