

Meeting Notes: General and Emergency Housing Taskforce meeting 10/29/2024

In Attendance:

Taskforce Members	Organization/Role	10/29/2024
Shaun Gilpin	Agency of Commerce and Community Development – Appointed by ACCD Commissioner	Present
Lily Sojourner	Department for Children and Families, Office of Economic Opportunity - Appointed by DCF Commissioner	Present
Miranda Gray (Nicole Tousignant)	Department for Children and Families, Economic Services Division	Present
Elizabeth Gilman	United Way and Vermont 211	Present
Molly Dugan	Appointed by - Long-Term Care Crisis Coalition	Absent
Brenda Siegel	Appointed by - Vermont Center for Independent Living	Present
Frank Knaack	Housing and Homeless Alliance of Vermont	Present
Elise Greaves	Vermont Housing and Conservation Board	Present
Amy Johnson	Vermont Care Partners	Present
Sarah Russell	Experience operating an emergency shelter program	Present
Jubilee McGill	1 Person with lived experience	Present
Shelby Lebaron	1 person with lived experience	Present
Christopher Louras	Homeless Response Coordinator, City of Rutland- Appointed by Vermont Leagues of Cities and Towns	Absent

Meeting Overview:

Facilitation: Sarah Russell facilitated the meeting, starting with member introductions.

Approval of Meeting Notes:

10/8/2024 notes: Brenda Siegel motioned to approve; Miranda Gray seconded. Shaun Gilpin abstained; all others approved the notes.

Public Forum:

Maryellen Griffin from Legal Aid: Maryellen has heard that people are being approved for assistance but then are not able to be housed because they are on a “do-not house” list at a hotel. Maryellen also believes that the hotels are sharing their do not house list and it further makes it difficult for clients to receive housing assistance. She was wondering if others have heard about this or how it could be addressed.

Assessment of Progress on Directives: Frank Knaack shared the GA Taskforce recommendations Chart to review. Live edits were made during the discussion.

- **Brenda Siegel** asked if the recommendations that she sent made it to everyone. Brenda will resend them and will be posted online.
- **Miranda Gray** asked for clarification to better understand if the members are sharing what they each believe should be in the recommendations or if further discussion will occur on the topics before a recommendation is made? Sarah Russell asked Miranda Gray to further share the agency's concerns and recommendations.
- **Representative Theresa Wood** asked if there are any VHIP units specifically for youth experiencing homelessness.
- **Shaun Gilpin** shared that youth are eligible for the VHIP, but they don't have a special category, and Shaun was unsure if there are any youth currently accessing the services.
- **Miranda Gray** also shared that decreasing the age of 60 to be eligible just means that there will be more people being served for the limited space. Disability and using ADA definition would mean that there is no way to verify eligibility. **Brenda Siegel** explained that the verification from the medical provider should stay in place but opening it to ADA definition for the medical providers. **Brenda Siegel** states that the program should define what a disability is by using ADA's definition.
- **Jubilee McGill** stated that this taskforce will not be providing language to the legislature and will not be providing a "full packet" as to what the recommendations would be. Miranda Gray shared that "perceived by other as having such an impairment" cannot be part of the disability determination as ESD staff should not be determining disability. **Jubilee McGill** shared that the definition line is used by housing providers to help people receive fair services. Other recommendations are to remove the number of days that is being suggested now for having to experience medical conditions, death of the spouse/child, or flood, fire or hurricane.
- **Lily Sojourner** asked again what level of recommendations are giving, is it specific language or is its general high level? **Brenda Siegel** has shared that her preference would be around high-level feedback and recommendation. **Jubilee McGill** shared that for some topics the recommendation might get specific because people have expertise in the area, other topics might have high level recommendations. Lily shared that this method is very challenging for the administration to work through. Miranda shared that while the budget is not part of the discussion, each recommendation has budgetary implications that must be kept in mind. **Shelby Lebaron** suggested that the taskforce goes line by line and vote on the household eligibility language.

Vote on Eligibility Criteria language as it would be recommended:

- 1) is 60 years of age or older;
 - Miranda- abstain, Lily- abstain, Elizabeth- agree, Brenda- agree, Amy- agree, Jubilee- agree, Sarah- agree, Shaun- abstain, Elise- abstain, Shelby- agree
 - 6 agreements, 4 abstain, 3 absent

(2) has a disability, as defined by ADA, that can be documented by :

- (A) written verification of the disability from a professional licensed by the State to diagnose and treat the disability and certification that the disability is

expected to be long-continuing or of indefinite duration and substantially impedes the individual's ability to live independently;

(B) written verification from the Social Security Administration;

(C) receipt of a disability check;

(D) intake staff-recorded observation of a disability that, not later than 45 days after the application for assistance, is confirmed and accompanied by

evidence of this; or

(E) other documentation approved by either the Department or the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; or

(F) a form developed by the Department as a means of documenting a qualifying disability or health condition that requires:

(i) the applicant's name, date of birth, and the last four digits of the applicant's Social Security number or other identifying number;

(ii) a description of the applicant's disability or health condition;

(iii) a description of the risk posed to the applicant's health, safety, or welfare if temporary emergency housing is not authorized pursuant to this section; and

(iv) a certification of a health care provider, as defined in 18 V.S.A. § 9481, that includes the provider's credentials, credential number, address, and phone number

- Miranda- abstain, Lily- abstain, Elizabeth- agree, Brenda- agree, Amy- agree, Jubilee- agree, Sarah- agree, Shaun- abstain, Elise- abstain, Shelby- agree
- 6 agreements, 4 abstain, 3 absent

(3) is experiencing a serious short-term medical condition or has been discharged from a health care facility where the individual was being treated for a serious short-term medical condition within the last X days;

- Taskforce members would like this removed and did not vote on it.

4) is a child 19 years of age or under Miranda- abstain, Lily- abstain, Elizabeth- agree, Brenda- agree, Frank – agree, Amy- agree, Jubilee- agree, Sarah- agree, Shaun- abstain, Elise- abstain, Shelby- agree

- 7 agreements, 4 abstain, 2 absent

5) is pregnant

- Miranda- agree, Lily- agree, Elizabeth- agree, Brenda- agree, Frank – agree, Amy- agree, Jubilee- agree, Sarah- agree, Shaun- agree, Elise- abstain, Shelby- agree
- 10 agreements, 1 abstain, 2 absent

6) has experienced the death of a spouse or domestic partner has experienced the death of a spouse, domestic partner, or minor child that caused their homelessness

- Miranda- agree, Lily- agree, Elizabeth- agree, Brenda- agree, Frank – agree, Amy- agree, Jubilee- agree, Sarah- agree, Shaun- agree, Elise- abstain, Shelby- agree
- 10 agreements, 1 abstain, 2 absent

7) has experienced a natural disaster, such as a flood, fire, or hurricane that caused the household to lose its housing.

- Miranda- agree, Lily- agree, Elizabeth- agree, Brenda- agree, Frank – agree, Amy- agree, Jubilee- agree, Sarah- agree, Shaun- agree, Elise- abstain, Shelby- agree
- 10 agreements, 1 abstain, 2 absent

(8) is under a court-ordered eviction or constructive eviction due to circumstances over which the household has no control; or

- Miranda- agree, Lily- agree, Elizabeth- agree, Brenda- agree, Frank – agree, Amy- agree, Jubilee- agree, Sarah- agree, Shaun- agree, Elise- abstain, Shelby- agree
- 10 agreements, 1 abstain, 2 absent

(9) is experiencing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, human trafficking, hate violence, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a household member

Sarah Russell would like to wait for additional feedback from STEPS. Taskforce members agreed to review this when information is received from the Network group.

A recommendation is to add a criterion:

10) add youth from ages 20-24 from Youth Development Program (YDP)

- Miranda: abstain, Lily- abstain, Elizabeth- agree, Brenda- agree, Frank – agree, Amy- agree, Jubilee- agree, Sarah- agree, Shaun- abstain, Elise- abstain, Shelby- agree
- 7 agreements, 4 abstain, 2 absent

Program requirements:

Income Contribution: currently 30% of income is required to be spent on hotel/motel room for current GA Clients. Brenda Siegel started by sharing the recommendation from her, Shelby Lebarron and Amy Johnson.. Details are included in the Amended Income Contribution Recommendation document.

Lily Sojourner asked if they have found how people worked through barriers to open savings and escrow accounts. Brenda Siegel stated that they have not heard of people having issues with opening accounts.

Nicole Tousignant shared that the group should consider that by removing the income contribution, the program could be open for anyone with any type of income.

Sarah Russell shared that the recommendations shared (just a few minutes prior to the meeting) would need time to read and process. Lily Sojourner shared that any type of structure to set up with banking institutions to help people save funds would require additional administrative costs. It would be important also consider how this would work during the application process. How quickly should people receive the assistance vs having this as a program and possibly add more time to the application process.

Sarah Russell asked if Nicole Tousignant if there is data that the taskforce could review as to how much the program is able to save by applying self-paid nights.

Nicole shared, since the beginning of July, there have been about a million dollars that have been self-paid.

Members discussed that having an escrow account could set clients up for permanent housing by having the deposit saved. Some suggested that by reducing the frequency of recertification/reauthorization (monthly, perhaps), ESD workers could lighten workload.

Miranda Gray shared that many times ESD does not have a control over how long the hotel/motels accept authorizations for. Jubilee McGill encouraged to identify changes where we can. Maybe ESD can't control how often the hotels require a new authorization, but it shouldn't mean that a new income verification should be determined.

This topic is tabled until members had a chance to read Brenda, Shelby and Amy's recommendations.

Engagement with Coordinated Entry:

Shelby Lebarron shared recommendations from her, Brenda Siegel and Amy Johnson around the participant engagement but stated that this is more how to hold the providers responsible.

Sarah Russell asked what were the outcomes of the CCHRT Team approach and if clients were more connected? Lily Sojourner responded that she would have to confirm with other team members around the outcome.

Sarah Russell asked what is the current requirement from clients? Nicole Tousignant shared that right now clients have a housing search activity, which often includes engaging with coordinated entry.

Topic is tabled for next meeting.

Adverse Weather Conditions:

Currently adverse weather conditions are from 12/1/24 through 3/31/25, which is a change from previous years when it could have started by mid-November depending on the weather. Frank Knaack shared that this is a winter weather program or possibly expanding it year around for some clients to not be outside. Campgrounds are usually closed from 10/31/24 through 3/31/25, and the program should follow the same guidelines and have other options for people. Miranda Gray asked how would people be prioritized for assistance, keeping in mind budget implications. Frank responded that the group did not consider the budget implications when making this recommendation. Sarah Russell stated that considering budget implications is not included within the directives charged to the Task Force.

Members discussed the use of motels and decrease access to rooms; some members believe that the legislation should look for ways to increase capacity and access.

Lily Sojourner suggested that for the last meeting, members should work together on the document, which means that there is only one more meeting to actively provide feedback.

Next Steps:

Lily Sojourner and Sarah Russell will work on a survey to understand what the top priorities of the members are.

Next meeting is suggested to be an all-day working session from 10am -4pm in Montpelier. A request is that all members join in person for this meeting.