

General Assistance Emergency Housing Task Force

8/6/2024 Meeting

In Attendance

Taskforce Members	Organization/Role	8/6/2024
Shaun Gilpin	Agency of Commerce and Community Development – Appointed by ACCD Commissioner	absent
Lily Sojourner	Department for Children and Families, Office of Economic Opportunity - Appointed by DCF Commissioner	present
Miranda Gray	Department for Children and Families, Economic Services Division	present
Elizabeth Gilman	United Way and Vermont 211	absent
Molly Dugan	Appointed by- Long-Term Care Crisis Coalition	present
Brenda Siegel	Appointed by - Vermont Center for Independent Living	present
Frank Knaack	Housing and Homeless Alliance of Vermont	present
Pollaidh Major	Vermont Housing and Conservation Board	absent
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	present

Introductions

The meeting began with introductions from all members.

Agenda Review

The agenda for today's meeting was reviewed.

Approval of Previous Meeting Notes

- The meeting notes from July 16, 2024, were reviewed.
- Brenda Siegel motioned to approve, and Lily Sojourner seconded the motion.
- The members present at the last meeting approved the minutes.
- Molly Dugan and Christopher Louras were absent from the first meeting so abstained.
- Final minutes will be posted.

Public Comment

Time was allotted for public comment, but no comments were made.

Presentation

- **Miranda Gray and Nicole Tousignant** from Economic Services presented an overview of the General and Emergency Housing Program.
 - **Miranda Gray** discussed the numerous changes in the program and the challenges these posed for clients, staff, and advocates.
 - **Nicole Tousignant** highlighted the program's evolution over the past few years (since 2020).
 - The PowerPoint presentation is available on the website.

Questions Raised During the Meeting

- **Megan Novak:** Asked if the date-to-date was independent of the weather. **Nicole Tousignant** confirmed that it was.
- **Rick DeAngelis:** Inquired about the state's method for determining the need for individuals with complex care needs. **Nicole Tousignant** explained that eligibility is determined based on rules. **Miranda Gray** added that there are gaps in the system to ensure people with complex needs can engage.
- **Frank Knaack:** Asked about the state's plans to address the elimination of federal funds starting next year. **Nicole Tousignant** explained that ERAP was used in various ways and that all allocated ERAP funding allocated to the GA program has been expended. Currently, the GA program is not supported by any federal funding.
- **Sarah Russell:** Asked about the success of Care Coordination teams and the availability of shelter space. **Nicole Tousignant** stated that reports on Care Coordination Teams would be shared with the Taskforce. Link to report: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/WorkGroups/Senate%20Appropriations/Reports%20and%20Resources/W~Shayla%20Livingston~Covid%2019%20Care%20Coordination%20Trasitional%20Housing%20Program%20Data~3-13-2023.pdf>
 - Shelter and motel space is checked every morning with referrals made based on availability and appropriateness.

- **Sarah Russell:** Requested data on how many people would meet categorical eligibility criteria during adverse weather. **Nicole Tousignant** stated that it is not completely possible to provide this data, as the program approves people in the easiest way possible, for example, without requiring eviction paperwork under adverse weather conditions. The numbers that are available will be shared post meeting.
- **Brenda Siegel:** Inquired about the process for clients being asked to go to a shelter and if there could be a permanent exemption form for certain individuals. **Nicole Tousignant and Lily Sojourner** explained the accommodation form for shelters and stated that there isn't a list of medical conditions that would automatically exclude individuals from shelter space. **Brenda Siegel** asked if there is an accommodation that could be submitted from a long-term medical provider that allows for a very gentle warm hand off, or exemption from shelter. **Miranda Gray** added that the state aims to transition people to shelters with additional support if needed, however, the State doesn't always know what the client needs. And many times, people can be given options that they might not like or prefer. We also need to learn and understand who needs respite level care instead of isolating in a motel/hotel room.
- **Amy Johnson:** Asked if shelter providers could be surveyed. **Sarah Russell** confirmed that survey was being collected and information will be shared soon.
- **Teresa Wood:** Asked about integrating other systems, like the Department of Health and the Department of Mental Health, into the program and creating a system, not with one-time fundings. **Sarah Russell** noted that local processes like coordinated entry are in place but need improvements and expansions.
- **Molly Dugan:** Inquired about the age limit for the elderly, which was clarified to be 65, returning to pre-COVID standards.
- **Megan Novak:** Asked if the new model would operate on a first-come, first-served basis. **Miranda Gray** explained that a procedure is being developed to prioritize the elderly, families with children, and domestic violence survivors when the 90% cap is reached.

Introduction of ICA Members

- **Sarah Russell** introduced ICA members **Meghan Raftery** and **Louise Masterson**.
 - **Meghan Raftery** demonstrated the coordinated entry website and explained the system, highlighting that each local coalition can pull their own lists.
 - The data presented was Statewide data from July.
 - Additional data, including at-risk and literally homeless, will be available this fall.
 - The data does not include households working exclusively with Domestic Violence Agencies due to federal information-sharing prohibitions.

Further Questions and Discussions

- **Jubilee McGill:** Asked about similar systems or GA Hotel/Motel programs in other states. **Meghan Raftery** stated that other states occasionally provide hotel/motel vouchers but primarily rely on shelters. Vermont has a significantly larger hotel/motel program compared to other states.
- **Frank Knaack:** Asked about engagement with other states to highlight coordinated entry data. **Meghan Morrow** shared that other states have large Coordinated Entry Programs, potentially including the GA program.
- **Christopher Louras:** Inquired about the historical data available. **Meghan Raftery** confirmed data availability from January 2017.
- **Rick DeAngelis from Good Samaritan** - a shelter network and they operate 4 shelters, ranging from a low barrier shelter to a recovery shelter, total of 82 shelter beds. In addition, they also have a street outreach program, supporting people who are camping. They also support people in about 50 GA hotel rooms with food, clothing and ongoing support. In Barre, there are about 450 individuals homeless, about 250 in motels, 100 in shelter and about 100 unsheltered. There is already a deficit of about 100 people who need shelter who are currently living outside. It is difficult to find buildings and then fund them to create shelters. Rick DeAngelis described the shelter network operations and the challenges faced, including interactions with motel owners and the intake process. He expressed a desire to partner more with ESD to improve the process.

Additional Discussions

- **Molly Dugan:** Addressed mobility and mental health challenges in shelters, noting that elderly homelessness is a fast-growing issue.
- **Frank Knaack:** Asked about funding to support programs. **Rick DeAngelis** mentioned special allocations and one-time funding.
- **Shelby Lebaron:** Agreed with **Rick DeAngelis** about motel/hotel owner issues, sharing instances of guests being mistreated and forced to leave.

Next Meeting

- **August 27, 2024, from 9 – 11am**
- Agenda (To Be Determined)
- **[Join Virtually](#)**
 - Meeting ID: 270 254 540 556
 - Passcode: tiPZbV
- **Join By Phone:** [802-828-7767](tel:802-828-7767)
 - Phone Conference ID: 811 418 671#
- **Join In Person:** Cherry A Conference Room, Waterbury State Office Complex, 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT 05671