

Meeting Notes: General and Emergency Housing Taskforce meeting 9/17/2024

In attendance:

Taskforce Members	Organization/Role	9/17/2024
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 (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	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 Lebarron	1 person with lived experience	present
Christopher Louras	Homeless Response Coordinator, City of Rutland- Appointed by Vermont Leagues of Cities and Towns	present

Agenda Issues:

- The agenda for today’s meeting was not posted publicly for 24 hours. Jubilee McGill checked with the House Clerk, who deferred to DCF Legal to see if the meeting could continue. DCF Legal approved the meeting continuing, however no action or decisions could be made during today’s meeting. The agenda was posted into the meeting chat so participants could follow along.

Facilitation:

- Jubilee McGill led the facilitation due to her presence in the room. The meeting continued with a focus on key agenda items.

Agenda Review:

- The agenda was reviewed.

Presentations:

- **Public Forum:**
 - The taskforce members read aloud public comments that were received since last month's meeting on 8/16/2024. These public comments will be posted to the GA Taskforce's webpage.
- **End Homelessness Vermont Overview and Presentation:**
 - **Presenters:** Brenda Siegel, Director of End Homeless Vermont
 - **Summary:**
 - Brenda reviewed End Homeless Vermont's role is providing support to Vermonters experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. Brenda Siegel reviewed a report End Homeless Vermont has been gathering data on since 2022. Brenda did not share a visual presentation of the report, as it is not yet finalized and currently includes PII. Brenda shared the report will be finalized and shared out some time next week. The presentation highlighted person driven data for individuals and families experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness.
 - Brenda emphasized the importance of reviewing person driven data as the Taskforce continues to discuss decisions and recommendations
 - Sarah Russell requested report be posted, along with minutes. Reporting data without posting link to data is not allowable.
 - **Questions:**
 - **Christopher Louras:** Will the number of families with children enrolled in VT school districts be included in the report
 - **Brenda Siegel:** Yes this will be included in the next phase of this report
 - **Molly Dugan:** Will the number of report participants be broken down into age ranges
 - **Brenda Siegel:** Yes
- **Agenda shifted to the next agenda items:**
 - *Discuss and determine household eligibility; maximum days of eligibility; application, notice, and appeals processes; participant requirements; and annual reporting requirements. (Charge 1)*

- *Discuss and determine potential adjustments to emergency housing policy during cold weather months. (Charge 7)*
- *Discuss and determine a mechanism to ensure that eligible households are sheltered until transitional or permanent housing is available. (Charge 11)*
- Discussion & Questions:
- **Shelby Labarron:** Started facilitating and raised concerns around 80 day and 1100 room cap. She stressed the importance of removing these. She shared more time needs to be allocated so people have time to connect with providers and find housing.
- **Amy Johnson:** Shared concerns around 80 day cap, sharing people with complex needs need much more time as do providers. She also shared concerns around people regressing if they reach their 80 day cap.
- Discussion of how 80 day cap may, or may not, relate to eligibility. Discussion shifted to eligibility, as it directly related to length of stay
- **Frank Knaack:** Shared [H879 bill](#) with proposed language changes. Taskforce reviewed language changes. Proposed qualifying language changes included:
 - Lowering the age from 65 to 60 years old
 - Including 19 years old as a qualifying age
 - Including all pregnancy trimesters, not just third trimester
 - Consider various forms of disability determination documentation Including participation in a treatment program, in addition to discharge from medical rehabilitation
 - Removing date range of 30 days for reasons that caused such as death of a spouse or child and natural disaster, etc.; include “... as reason/cause of homelessness”
- **Lily Sojourner and Miranda Gray:** Shared concerns around including multiple variants and exemptions as it presents administrative challenges when implementing program requirements and confusion. Emphasized intake workers are not trained in determining disability. Nicole Tousignant shared out the variance [form](#) that medical professionals currently fill out when they determine an individual has a qualifying disability.
- Lily Sojourner: are there further prioritizations we want to consider when rooms are at capacity?

- **Christopher Louras:** raised concerns around needing to review eligibility prioritization categories to determine where limited resources will go. He emphasized the need to prioritize families with children.
- **Brenda Siegel and Shelby LeBarron** raised concerns around prioritization categories. They both emphasized the need to ensure all Vermonters are sheltered.
- **Jubilee McGill** raised concerns around the number of charges tasked to this Taskforce. Asked taskforce members to send the top task they would like to see prioritized to herself and Sarah Russell. She and Sarah will then review and bring this information back to the next Taskforce meeting. Also Jubilee will check with the House Clerk to see if this Taskforce is able to meet as a sub-committee between now and the next taskforce meeting.

Public Comment:

- Public comments were made in the meeting by Rep. Theresa Wood if the State of Vermont Agency of Human Services or Department for Children and Families had estimated what it might cost if the 1100 room cap was removed, but the eligibility categories that are in the budget bill are used.
 - **Miranda Gray:** We haven't as right now we are focusing on administering the law which is to get down to the 1100 room cap. Miranda shared the [GA Admin Procedure](#) with the taskforce

Approval of Previous Meeting Notes:

- Could not be approved today due to agenda not being posted publicly 24 hours in advance

Next Steps:

- The next meeting will be scheduled for 10/8/2024 from 11:30am to 2:30pm.
- Meeting location will be at the State House. Meeting room TBD.
- Task Force members were requested to send specific areas of interest with regard to the Task Force charges, to Sarah Russell and Jubilee McGill to form workgroups.
- Task Force members were requested to send specific eligibility criteria suggestions to Sarah Russell and Jubilee McGill
- Last meeting will encompass public forum re. task force recommendations