

Meeting Notes: General and Emergency Housing Taskforce Meeting

Date: 11/19/2024

In Attendance

Taskforce Members	Organization/Role	Attendance
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
Elise Greaves	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 League of Cities and Towns	Present

Meeting Overview

Facilitation:

- **Online:** Sarah Russell facilitated.
 - **In-Person:** Jubilee McGill facilitated, starting with member introductions.
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Approval of Meeting Notes

- **10/29/2024 Notes:**

- **Motion to Approve:** Brenda Siegel.
 - **Seconded:** Molly Dugan.
 - **Abstention:** Nicole Tousignant.
 - **Outcome:** Approved by all other members.
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Public Forum

- No public comments were received.
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Prioritization Survey Results

Top Priorities Identified:

1. Household eligibility, maximum days of eligibility, application, notice, and appeals processes; participant requirements; and annual reporting requirements.
 2. Number and types of emergency shelter spaces needed across geographic regions, with a preference for non-congregate spaces.
 3. Identification of state/local rules impeding housing development and recommendations for changes to facilitate faster housing construction.
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Taskforce Recommendations Discussion and review of the [Recommendations Draft Document](#)

Eligibility Criteria Updates:

- **Key Criteria Include:**
 - Members aged 60+; pregnant individuals; survivors of violence (domestic, sexual, human trafficking, etc.); families with children aged 19 or younger; youth exiting foster care (19–24); individuals with ADA-documented disabilities; victims of disasters or evictions.
- **Additional Criteria Suggested but was not included in the vote:** Reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities.
- **Voting on Eligibility Section (Domestic Violence Language):**
 - **Motion:** Jubilee McGill.
 - **Seconded:** Molly Dugan.
 - **Vote Outcome:**
 - **Yes:** 6 (Brenda Siegel, Amy Johnson, Sarah Russell, Jubilee McGill, Shelby LeBarron, Molly Dugan)

- **Abstain:** 2 (Nicole Tousignant, Lily Sojourner)
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Resource Test:

- **Current Rule:** Applicants must use funds toward housing if funds exceed \$80; those with less could not be expected to self-pay, therefore would be housed. Applicants' savings/assets are used to determine eligibility.
 - **Proposed Change:** Eliminate resource test entirely.
 - **Motion to Eliminate Resource Test:** Brenda Siegel.
 - **Seconded:** Sarah Russell.
 - **Vote Outcome:**
 - **Yes:** 9 (Brenda Siegel, Amy Johnson, Sarah Russell, Frank Knaack, Shelby LeBarron, Molly Dugan, Elizabeth Gilman, Jubilee McGill, Christopher Louras)
 - **Abstain:** 2 (Nicole Tousignant, Lily Sojourner)
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Discretionary Eligibility:

- **Original Language:** AHS Field Services Directors will have some level of discretion with regard to eligibility for households that do not meet above categorical eligibility and funding pool shall exist for this purpose.
 - **Concerns:**
 - Some members argued against merging AHS discretionary practices with GA Program.
 - Others raised concerns about vague language ("some level of discretion").
 - **Proposed Replacement Language from Brenda Siegel:**
 - "The department should always have the ability to make reasonable accommodations and/or exceptions that may include but are not limited to adjustments to shelter policy and day limits."
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Program Requirements

Engagement with Coordinated Entry and Case Management:

- **Original Language:** Engagement with Coordinated Entry and/or approved housing case management

- Reviewed existing requirements:
 - Engagement includes coordinated entry assessments, housing placements, and addressing housing barriers.
 - Members added provisions for specialized housing services.
 - **Outcome:** Further review tabled to the next meeting.
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Income Contribution:

- Current Rule: Clients must contribute 30% of income for housing.
 - Members debated whether to eliminate or modify the rule.
 - **Outcome:** Submit multiple options for legislative consideration due to lack of consensus.
 - **Vote Outcome:**
 - **Yes:** 9 (Brenda Siegel, Amy Johnson, Sarah Russell, Frank Knaack, Shelby LeBarron, Molly Dugan, Elizabeth Gilman, Jubilee McGill, Christopher Louras)
 - **Abstain:** 2 (Nicole Tousignant, Lily Sojourner)
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Income Certification:

- Current Rule: Clients must certify monthly income, as frequently as weekly.
 - Suggestions: Extend certification period to 90 days to reduce administrative burden and encourage employment.
 - Outcome tabled.
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Additional Topics Discussed

Shelter Placement Policy:

- **Original Language:** Must accept shelter placement that meets household needs in the community when offered/available
- Concerns about requiring households to accept any placement that meets needs.
- **Legislative Recommendation:** Review restrictive language with legal analysis. Members voted on edited language.
- **Vote Outcome:**

- **Yes:** 8 (Shelby LeBarron, Frank Knaack, Amy Johnson, Elizabeth Gilman, Sarah Russell, Molly Dugan, Jubilee McGill, Brenda Siegel)
 - **Abstain:** 2 (Nicole Tousignant, Lily Sojourner)
 - (Chris Louras was no longer on the call at the time of the vote)
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Notice, Application, and Appeals Processes:

- Members proposed changes to benefit and denial letters.
 - Benefit Award Letter: Changes were made during the meeting to this section.
 - **Motion:** Brenda Siegel
 - **Seconded:** Shelby LeBarron
 - **Vote Outcome:**
 - **Yes:** 8 (Brenda Siegel, Amy Johnson, Sarah Russell, Jubilee McGill, Shelby LeBarron, Molly Dugan, Frank Knaack, Chris Louras)
 - **Abstain:** 2 (Nicole Tousignant, Lily Sojourner)
 - Programmatic Changes: Changes were made during the meeting to this section.
 - **Motion:** Brenda Siegel
 - **Seconded:** Shelby LeBarron
 - **Vote Outcome:**
 - **Yes:** 8 (Brenda Siegel, Amy Johnson, Sarah Russell, Jubilee McGill, Shelby LeBarron, Molly Dugan, Frank Knaack, Chris Louras)
 - **Abstain:** 2 (Nicole Tousignant, Lily Sojourner)
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Next Steps

- **Data Review:** Frank Knaack to share data on homelessness duration by 12/10/2024.
- **Emergency Shelter Capacity Assessment:** Frank to share report with the group as soon as possible.
- **Recommendation from members:** Members can submit feedback by 12/9/2024 to Sarah Russell and Jubilee McGill.
- **Next Meeting:** Poll to determine date and time.