

**In Attendance**

<b>Taskforce Members</b>	<b>Organization/Role</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
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	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 LeBarron	1 Person with lived experience	Present
Christopher Louras	Homeless Response Coordinator, City of Rutland – Appointed by Vermont League of Cities and Towns	Present

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**Meeting Overview**

**Facilitation:**

- Sarah Russell and Jubilee McGill co-facilitated, starting with member introductions.
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## Approval of Meeting Notes

- **11/19/2024 Notes:**
    - Motion to Approve: Brenda Siegel.
    - Seconded: Molly Dugan.
    - Abstention: Elise Greaves.
    - **Outcome:** Approved by all other members.
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## Public Forum

- **Comments Received:**
    - Two written submissions read by taskforce members.
      - **Troy Rider:** Urged the taskforce to keep people sheltered until permanent housing is found, citing personal health impacts of homelessness.
      - **George Flannery:** Shared experiences of health deterioration while unsheltered, emphasizing the importance of reasonable accommodations under ADA.
    - **Representative Theresa Wood** shared that she and Senator Ginny Lyons met with DCF's Commissioner, Chris Winters and expressed that the intent of the law was not to unhouse people when someone else who was more vulnerable could be housed.
    - No additional public comments were received during the meeting.
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## Reviewing the Guiding Document for the Legislative Report

Live edits were made based on documentation that the Task Force has put together from all recommendations. The committee worked to compile the language from what was voted on last time into a master document.

Representative Wood asked what the plan was for the committee on submitting the final report; will it be recommendations from the taskforce if it received majority of the votes or if they will be also submitting the minority section.

Jubilee McGill responded that the report would have a recommendation for each section based on if the majority of the support was received during a vote. If members didn't agree with the recommendation or abstained, then they could submit a separate report to explain their standpoint.

Representative Wood would like to have all feedback in one document, section by section.

Lily Sojourner asked for clarifications around what is still needed, how the report will be written and when will members have a chance to review and respond.

Jubilee McGill shared that the draft report should be out by December 23<sup>rd</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup> for public comment. Then, all final comments and recommendations from minority votes can be submitted by January 8<sup>th</sup> to the co-chairs.

### **Reviewing the recommendations by members**

Frank Knaack shared HHAVs recommendations and specifically called out that the length of stay shouldn't be a set number (currently 80 days) but rather it should be set by the average length of stay that someone must use before they are able to move to permanent housing. This would be calculated based on Coordinated Entry data. Currently, that's 440 days. Lily Sojourner shared that the language should include a maximum length, or some type of parameters to around when someone will max out. Brenda Siegel shared that people with chronic medical needs should receive more than the average as it takes them longer to find permanent housing. Sarah Russell didn't completely agree with that and stated that most people with disabilities have access to different housing resources. From her perspective, individuals with substance use disorders are the most difficult to house.

Brenda Siegel shared that from her perspective individuals with substance use disorders are part of the group who she considers as individuals with chronic or significant medical needs.

Brenda Siegel and Jubilee McGill shared that exceptions should be allowed for certain populations on the length of stay. Lily Sojourner shared that it's not a reasonable accommodation to extend the length of stay. If a certain population should receive more days, it should be noted specifically instead of building a program on exceptions.

Elise Graves shared that calling out a subpopulation and allowing for accommodations pins people against each other.

Sarah Russell shared that case consultations are currently happening in a monthly coordinated entry meeting. The consultations occur to discuss barriers toward housing on an individual level. If the only barrier is finding a unit, the team wouldn't discuss it as there is not enough units and that's the last barrier.

The committee members discussed the length of stay recommendations made by HHAV.

Miranda Gray asked what the recommendation for the start and end of the length of stay is. If people could come back for additional assistance for different reasons. If the length of stay changes yearly, wouldn't the maximum be at 365 days. Frank Knaack shared that this is a way to calculate days, and right now that's over 400 days, but the legislation can take that into account and make recommendations based on that.

### Voting on length of stay and Days of Eligibility as proposed language:

Households will be eligible for GA-EHP motel stay until:

- Homelessness is resolved; or

- leg to look at requirement around accepting alternative shelter and housing to meet needs of households and review by legal to ensure compliance (Olmsted)
- Household has refused to engage in Coordinated Entry and/or adequate housing case management; or
- Household becomes ineligible, based on above criteria
- HH used max length of stay (footnote based on HMIS data) within a 12-month period

Miranda – abstain, Lily- abstain, Elizabeth- yes, Molly- yes, Brenda – yes, Frank – yes, Amy- yes, Jubilee- yes, Sarah – yes, Elise – yes, Shelby- yes, Chris – no

Abstain: 2, Yes: 9, No: 1

#### **Recommendations from VHCB and DHCD:**

Elise Graves made recommendations on ensuring that there is consistent capital available to fund projects that are moving through the development pipeline. Without confidence in the availability of funding, it is impossible for developers to advance critically needed housing projects. They are also recommending speeding up and streamlining the appeal process. They are also recommending reducing the timeline to 6 months with plan and project reviews to convert hotel/motels to shelters.

Members then discussed the difficulty to convert hotel/motel to a shelter due to zoning laws. Currently, for zoning hotel/motel allows for more occupancy than a shelter/ permanent housing unit would for the same building. A recommendation would be for the legislature to override local zoning regulations to allow for this recommendation to be considered.

Members added language to recommendations submitted by VHCB and DHCD about permanent supportive housing to the guiding document for the final report.

#### Language voted on:

- That any building that has been zoned for use as a hotel or motel be automatically allowed to be converted for use as a shelter and permanent supportive housing for households exiting homelessness.

In addition, the GA-EHP Task Force recommends the Act 181 Committee and legislature consider the following questions:

- Explore mechanism to ensure no other zoning conditions exist which impact capacity of developed shelter and/or permanent supportive housing units is not decreased during conversion from motel use

Miranda – abstain, Lily- abstain, Brenda – yes, Frank – yes, Amy- yes, Jubilee- yes, Sarah – yes, Elise – abstain, Shelby- yes, Chris – yes

Abstain: 3, Yes: 7

**Notice, Applications and Appeals section, focusing on appeals in this meeting:**

Nicole Tousignant reviewed the current process for the appeal. Brenda Siegel shared her experience with the fair hearing request.

Brenda Siegel would like to add to the notice who/ what organization people can contact for legal services and for additional supports and representation. Members discussed that it would be challenging to keep tabs which organizations should be given to clients to represent them. It also feels inappropriate for DCF to refer people to organizations without vetting them first and that process is not currently in place

Brenda Siegel then asked that clients continue to be sheltered until the fair hearing is complete. Other members shared how this would have a significant impact on the budget. Some clients might not be eligible from the beginning but would be occupying a room that an eligible person could occupy. Sarah Russell shared that she didn't feel comfortable with applicants who are not eligible from the start, but would be ok if they are already in the program to receive housing while there are going through the fair hearing process.

Language voted on:

Household will be sheltered for duration of appeal process and through determination to the extent there is capacity, except in instances where behavior threatens the health and safety of others at the motel. The legislature should develop language to ensure there is equitable and non-discriminatory definition of behavior that threatens health and safety.

Miranda – abstain, Lily- abstain, Molly- yes, Brenda – yes, Frank – yes, Amy- yes, Jubilee- yes, Sarah – no, Elise – abstain, Shelby- yes, Chris – no

Abstain: 3, Yes: 6, No: 2

**Adverse Weather:**

Frank Knaack asked if the taskforce would want to add “extreme weather” or “other weather” emergency plans that would allow people to shelter in motel/hotel rooms. Lily Sojourner shared that “extreme weather” shelter initiatives are currently in place.

Chris Louras shared that municipalities would have a better understanding of what is needed during an emergency event and would hope to have decision powers over the legislation. Jubilee McGill shared that the legislation must be involved if funds should be allocated to town municipalities.

Language voted on:

AWC must include relaxed eligibility requirements to avoid exposure death, to align with closure of VT State Parks for the season: October 15 – April 15. There is agreement that adequate funding and support for seasonal low-barrier shelter must be provided.

Miranda – abstain, Lily- abstain, Molly- yes, Brenda – yes, Frank – yes, Jubilee- yes, Sarah – yes, Elise – abstain, Shelby- yes, Chris – yes

Abstain: 3, Yes: 7

**The number and types of emergency shelter spaces needed and currently available for each geographic region in the State, with a preference for no congregate shelter spaces;**

Sarah Russell and Frank Knaack raised concerns about the analysis that they have completed on the need around emergency hotel/motel rooms and capacity.

HHAV, OEO and Community Partners will continue to discuss and present to the legislature.

Chris Louras voiced concerns that the language does not take into effect local capacities and regional distribution of resources.

Language voted on:

HHAV will work with community and State partners and both Continua of Care to develop an annual report to detail scale and type of emergency shelter required to meet the need.

Miranda – yes, Lily- yes, Molly- yes, Brenda – yes, Frank – yes, Jubilee- yes, Sarah – yes, Elise – abstain, Shelby- yes, Chris – yes

Abstain: 1, Yes: 9

**The current organization of roles and responsibilities within the Department for Children and Families' Office of Economic Opportunity and the Division of Economic Services;**

Brenda Siegel shared recommendations with the focus on disability and reasonable accommodations for shelter access.

Members agreed to add a sentence "The department should always have the ability to make reasonable accommodations." To the legislative report.

Language to vote on is only for the additional sentence, not the full section of the recommendations for charge #3.

Miranda – abstain, Lily- abstain, Molly- yes, Brenda – yes, Frank – yes, Jubilee- yes, Sarah – yes, Elise – abstain, Shelby- yes, Chris – yes

Abstain: 3, Yes: 7

Brenda Siegel asked member to consider adding Reasonable Accommodations for Shelter Access and read her recommendation to the group.

Members argued that the reasonable accommodations should be in rules but not in statute.

## **Reporting Requirements:**

### Language voted on:

AHS will provide monthly reports detailing the following, statewide and by-district:

- Households served; population break-down
- Households eligible but not able to serve due to room capacity
- Number of motel rooms
- To the extent possible, number of households exited for reasons in the following categories:
- Ineligible, based on criteria
  - Behavior-based
  - Obtained permanent housing
  - Obtained community-based shelter bed
  - Other

In all instances above, data should not be provided publicly in cases where number is below 12 to protect confidentiality, however local data may be shared with CE Lead Agency, when households are enrolled in CE. ESD will designate a representative in each district to serve a point-of-contact for Lead Agencies. ESD point-of-contact will attend local case conferencing circles (when CE ROI is in-place).

Nicole – abstain, Lily- abstain, Molly- yes, Brenda – yes, Frank – yes, Jubilee- yes, Sarah – yes, Elise – abstain, Shelby- yes, Chris – yes

Abstain: 3, Yes: 7

## **The process to establish a single, statewide, unified coordinated entry system with participation from the Department;**

### Language voted on:

There is agreement that a single, statewide, unified coordinated entry system exists and the system must be improved with benchmarks and tied to funding. In partnership with CCHA and BoS, OEO will determine benchmarks, requirements, and outcomes which include the following:

- Expanded standards for service provision:
  - Field-based services, opposed to office-based services
  - Scope of service related to engagement, role of case management, performance indicators
  - Training and professional development for case management staff
    - Adequate funding to reduce wait-times for connection to case management services
    - Adequate funding to reduce wait-times for CE assessment and enrollment

There is agreement that AHS (and its contractors) must engage with and participate within the coordinated entry system, to include:

- Adequately funding and training for AHS contractors to provide housing-related case management
- Investing in workforce development for direct service workers, including providing professional development
- There is acknowledgement that the needs of households have shifted in acuity and require intervention that is, at times, clinical in nature, and therefore, AHS (ESD, DAIL, FSD, DMH, VDH, DCF, etc.) and AHS contractors (including but not limited to AAAs, MH and SUD designated agencies, , CDD/Parent-Child Centers) must engage in and provide coordinated entry assessment and housing navigation services; training in housing navigation must be provided to AHS staff and contractors; housing navigation must be part of the role of staff and contractors
- Utilization of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) across AHS staff and contractors
- Each AHS departments must identify point-of-contact to participate in local case conferencing activities

Nicole – abstain, Lily- abstain, Molly- yes, Brenda – yes, Frank – yes, Jubilee- yes, Sarah – yes, Elise – abstain, Shelby- yes, Chris – yes

Abstain: 3, Yes: 7

### **The identification of a consistent lead agency for each geographic region;**

#### Language voted on:

Each region currently has a lead agency for administration of the coordinated entry system. The State must ensure adequate funding for each lead agency. Lead agencies will be required to determine benchmarks and procedure related to:

- Identify CE System Lead (staff member(s))
- Define role and responsibility for outcomes of the CE System Lead to include:
  - Wait-time for assessment
  - Interim service provision until household can be assigned to case management
  - Timely data entry for HMIS
  - Complete assessment data entered into HMIS (include all areas of CE assessment)
    - Contingency-planning when there is a wait-time to conduct assessment and/or connection to case management



- Process for communication and work-flow when case manager is not connected to the CE system
- Policies for expansion of CE partners within the region and statewide

Nicole – abstain, Lily- abstain, Molly- yes, Brenda – yes, Frank – yes, Jubilee- yes, Sarah – yes, Elise – abstain, Shelby- yes, Chris – yes

Abstain: 3, Yes: 7

Members decided not to vote on **charge #12**, but instead they will be making a list of suggestions for the legislature to consider.

**A mechanism for addressing potential conduct challenges posed by a member of a participating household served in a motel, hotel, or shelter;**

Language voted on:

The members of the Task Force agree:

- a. Periods of ineligibility shall be removed
- b. Challenges related to either conduct or more often a person's disability should instead be addressed using the same principles as a Housing First Model. Individuals should be met where they are at to work with them on addressing these challenges, and when necessary, working with clients to move households to an environment that has a better chance at success, understanding that this may take multiple tries.
- c. This does not prohibit a hotel from getting a no trespass, addressing challenges through the criminal legal system, or choosing not to renew a household.

Nicole – abstain, Lily- abstain, Molly- yes, Brenda – yes, Frank – yes, Jubilee- yes, Sarah – yes, Elise – abstain, Shelby- yes, Chris – yes

Abstain: 3, Yes: 7

**Next Steps**

- **Recommendation Submissions:** Members to provide final feedback by 01/08/2025.
- **Final Report:** Report will be submitted by January 15, 2025.