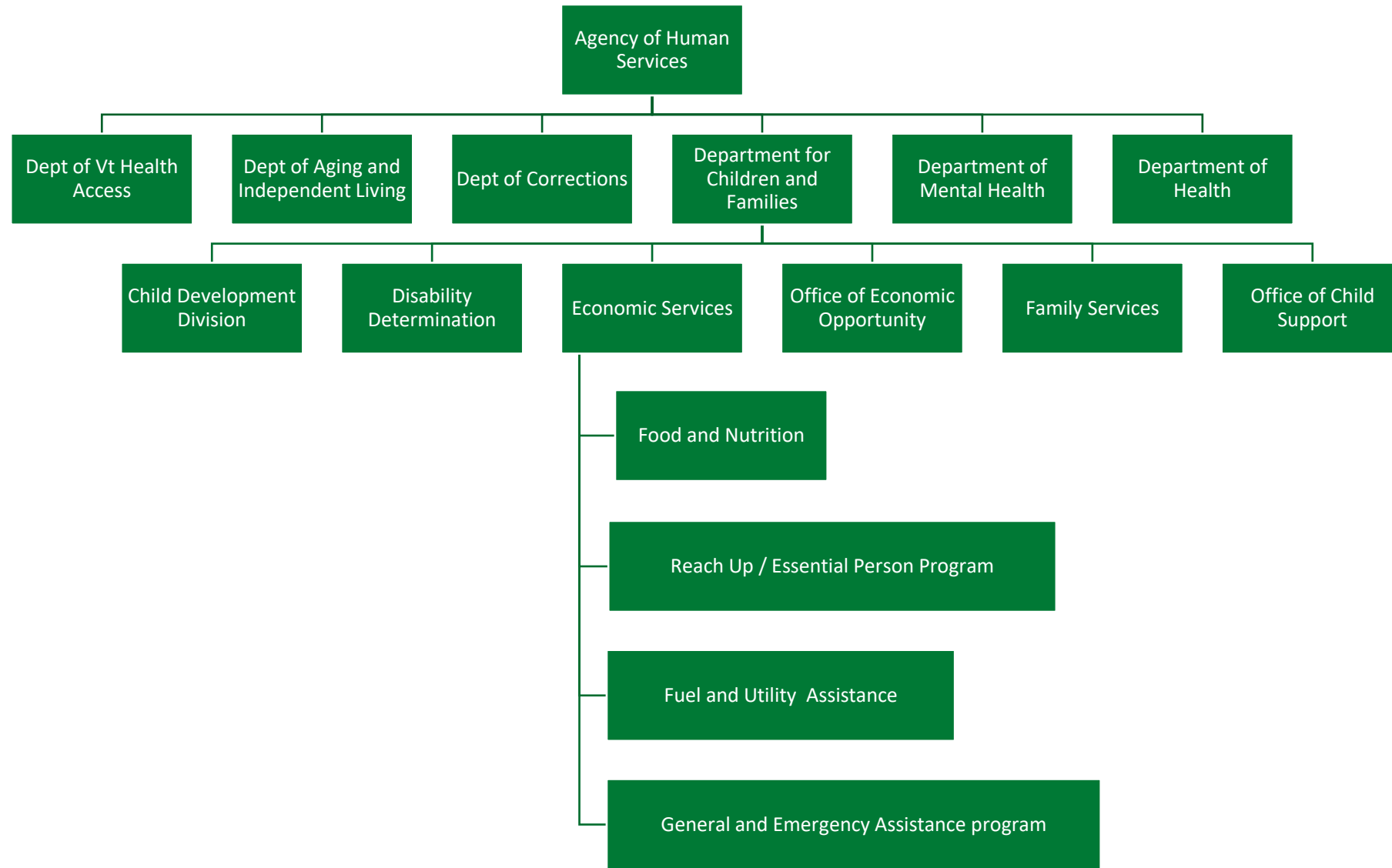




Economic Services Division Community Meeting

Presented by: Miranda Gray, Deputy Commissioner,
Economic Services Division, DCF

Economic Services within the Agency of Human Services



Economic Services Organizational Structure

- ESD has approximately 350 staff located in [12 ESD district offices](#) around the state and central office in Waterbury.
- District offices (co-located with other AHS offices) work directly with households applying for or currently receiving benefits. This can be in-person or on the phone.
- Based on their role, direct service staff will determine eligibility for ESD programs so that benefits can be issued, or case management can be provided.
- As of November 4th, all district office staff will be serving the public from their designated office building. ESD has been trying to manage the workload while also supporting telework but have found that we need a reset to see how we can best do this to better serve Vermonters.
- ESD's Central Office houses:
 - ESD Operations Team
 - Four ESD Program Teams
 - Administrative Services
 - Training Unit
 - Quality, Performance, & Compliance (QPC)
 - Business Application Support Unit (BASU)
 - Call Center
 - Application and Documentation Processing Center (ADPC)



Economic Services' Mission and Vision

Our mission:

To provide high quality service while administering programs to improve economic well-being for Vermonters.

Our vision:

Vermonters thrive with a sense of independence and connection to their communities.

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/esd>

Economic Services' Strategic Plan

Strategic Plan

The 2024-2026 Strategic Plan was developed based on reflection, feedback and ideas from division staff.

<https://outside.vermont.gov/dept/DCF/Shared%20Documents/ESD/ESD-Strategic-Plan-Community.pdf>

Integrated Eligibility and Enrollment Program

humanservices.vermont.gov/highlighting-promising-practice/integrated-eligibility-and-enrollment-iee-system

Statement: We live in a world where eligible Vermonters have a simple and easy way to apply for, access, and maintain health care and financial benefits, without coverage gaps.

VT-IES Vermont Integrated Eligibility Solution Project Includes:

- Case Management System: Modernizing our case management system to improve the user experience.
- Business Rules Engine: The “brains” of the case management system
- Customer Portal: Including: updated document submittal portal, and improved online application, robust access to forms and resources
- Current Status: RFP has been posted: <https://bgs.vermont.gov/vermont-integrated-eligibility-system-vt-ies>

Noticing Solution Project Includes:

- A new Customer Communication Management System (CCMS): Modernizing the technology used to create customer notices.
- Current Status: The procurement team is reviewing vendor bids.

Supplemental Food Programs

3SquaresVT

- A federal USDA program that helps Vermonters put healthy foods on the table every day!

3SquaresVT in a SNAP

- An easier way for older & disabled Vermonters to access 3SquaresVT – a program that helps Vermonters put healthy foods on the table.

Farm to Family

- Helps Vermonters buy fresh fruits, vegetables & herbs at participating farmers markets and farm stands.

Individual Career Advancement Network (ICAN)

- Offers free employment and training supports to eligible Vermonters.

SNAP Education

- Teaches people how to make their 3SquaresVT dollars stretch, shop for and cook healthy meals and stay physically active.

Summer EBT

- Helps families get groceries during the summer break when school meals aren't available.

Supplemental Food Programs Highlights

Monthly 3SquaresVT caseload data is available online <https://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/resources/data>.
Current participation includes 64,757 individuals in 38,792 households.
Currently \$11 - \$13 million dollars every month in 3SquaresVT benefits are issued to participants.

3SquaresVT in a SNAP is a demonstration project to make it easier for customers to apply for and keep their 3SVT benefits – currently this population is almost half of the 3SVT caseload. Eligible households include individuals at least 60 years old or living with a disability and with no earned income. Goal of the project is to increase access to the 3SVT program by utilizing an easier application process and longer certification period. These 3SVT customers also have a dedicated eligibility worker and access to their direct telephone number.

Farm to Family program runs 7/1 – 10/31 every year. Program participants receive coupon books to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at local farmers markets and farm stands (\$30 per household and \$48 for senior households). The program's goal is to change food shopping and eating habits and build the consumer base for local farmers markets.

Supplemental Food Programs Highlights

ICAN is Vermont's SNAP Employment and Training program that provides free supports and services to help participants look for and retain jobs and pursue education/training. ICAN services also include case management and reimbursements to pay for employment/training related expenses.

ICAN data: average participant age is 43; average participant reimbursement amount is \$264; total number of participants is 535

SNAP Education partners include Vermont Department of Health, People's Farm Stand, Vermont Garden Network Mobile Classroom, Vermont Foodbank and Veggie Van Go, University of Vermont, Come Alive Outside Outdoor Passport and the Abenaki Nation. One of the goals of SNAP Ed is to reduce nutrition-related health inequities in SNAP populations. Projects are evidence-based and are assessed annually.

Summer EBT is a new federal program. This summer provided \$120 in food grocery benefits per child. Children are categorically eligible if they receive 3SVT, Reach Up, or Medicaid or if they participate in the Migrant Education Program or are in foster care. In addition to categorical eligibility, families who are income eligible can apply. For 2024 so far, Vermont has provided \$4.4 million to 36,608 children in 22,109 households. We still have a few smaller benefit issuances that are going out this month to finish up the 2024 season. Applications for 2025 are open on our website <https://summerebt.vermont.gov/>

Reach Up Programs

Reach Up

- Provides cash assistance and helps caregivers/families to set and reach short and long-term goals that will enable them to financially support their minor, dependent children.

Post-Secondary Education

- Helps Vermonters with children earn an undergraduate college degree so they can get a good paying job.

Reach Up – Child-Only

- Provides cash assistance to help adults care for the minor, dependent children of relatives or family friends.

Reach Ahead (Pilot program until June 30, 2025)

- Reach Ahead Pilot helps transition from Reach Up or Post-Secondary Education (PSE) to work by providing work support payments, additional food benefit, childcare subsidy and other work supports.

Reach First

- Helps families get through a temporary, short-term financial crisis and avoid the need for longer-term assistance.

Reach Up Programs Highlights

Mission:

Reach Up joins families on their journey to overcome obstacles, explore opportunities, improve their finances and reach their goals.

Vision:

Families are empowered, connected and thriving.

Essential Person Program

Essential Person

- Helps Vermonters stay in their home by paying part of the cost to have someone live with them and provide essential care.

Fuel & Utilities Programs

Fuel Assistance

- Helps pay for a portion of home heating bills — whether the Vermonter owns their home or rents, pays for heat directly or as part of their rent.

Crisis Fuel

- A program that can help Vermonters with a heating crisis in the winter months.

Energy Assistance

- Helps lower-income Vermonters by reducing their monthly energy bills for their homes.

We process around 36,000 applications a year.

Heating and Utility Program Highlights

- Currently there around 16,000 Seasonal Fuel Households and 14,000 fixed benefit Households (\$21) that includes, Roomers, Housing subsidy cases where all utilities are included in rent and our “Heat and Eat” cases.
- Grants are typically made from late September (firewood/pellets) through mid-March (all fuels). However, for the past 3 years, we have issued a wood and pellet benefit in the summer, so Households can purchase it at a lower cost.
- If you qualify for Seasonal Fuel, you automatically qualify for Weatherization.
- The Crisis component of our program is administered by Vermont’s five Community Action Agencies (BROC, Capstone, CVOEO, NEKCA and SEVCA) and runs from the last Monday in November through to the last business day in April or until funding runs out.
- In FFY2024, the Community Action Agencies served approximately 2,700 households with LIHEAP dollars. However, they serve many more households through donations and private funding that they raise throughout the year.

Utility Assistance Highlights

Green Mountain Power and Vermont Gas have been running these programs for more than a decade now.

- Benefits are funded by a surcharge on all GMP & VGS rate-payers.
- To be eligible for Energy Assistance you must be a residential customer of Green Mountain Power and Vermont Gas.
- Green Mountain Power (GMP) 25% discount on entire bill; 185% federal poverty maximum; new enrollees could be eligible for a one-time arrearage forgiveness.
- Vermont Gas Systems (VGS) 20% discount on entire bill; 185% federal poverty maximum

Both Washington Electric Co-op (WEC) and Vermont Electric Corporation (VEC) have rolled out a new community solar project that gives eligible households a \$45 per month credit on their bills. There is a limited number of slots available, until they can secure additional funding.

- In addition, the Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA) will be starting a similar program in 2025, and they have 11 Electric providers.

Utility Assistance Income Guidelines

Number in Household	185% (SF, GMP, VGS, Community Solar Project)	200% Crisis Fuel
1	\$2,322	\$2,510
2	\$3,151	\$3,406
3	\$3,981	\$4,304
4	\$4,810	\$5,200
5	\$5,639	\$6,096
6	\$6,469	\$6,994
7	\$7,298	\$7,890

General Assistance

General Assistance

- The General Assistance program is a safety net program designed to help eligible Vermonters meet their basic needs including: rental assistance, mortgage assistance, personal needs allowance, assistance with utility bills, assistance for emergency dental care, and assistance with payment for prescription medication.

Emergency Housing

- A program that can assist eligible households with temporary housing in emergency situations.

Vermont Spay Neuter Incentive Program (VSNIP)

- Assists eligible Vermonters with the cost of having their dogs and cats spayed or neutered.

Vermont Rental Subsidy Program

- The Vermont Rental Subsidy Program provides short term rental assistance to eligible households with monthly income that would otherwise be insufficient to afford the cost of rent in their communities.

General Assistance Program Highlights Continued

- General Assistance Housing Program Data is posted weekly on our web: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/Addressing-and-Preventing-Unsheltered-Homelessness>
- The General Assistance Emergency Housing Task Force was created to provide recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the statewide and local operation and administration of the GA Housing benefit. Details about the taskforce are posted on our website: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/contacts/boards/GA-Task-Force>
- General Assistance Housing Program related Community meetings have been held Monthly since May 2024. Past communications are available on our website: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/Addressing-and-Preventing-Unsheltered-Homelessness#Comms>
- We utilize the two Continuum of Care for distribution lists to share upcoming Community meeting invites. You can sign up to get the information from the Housing & Homeless Alliance of Vermont <https://helpingtohousevt.org/> and for our future meeting invites.

**Stay
Connected**

**Meet our
District
Directors:**

Emily Barlow for Springfield and Brattleboro offices

Email: Emily.Barlow@vermont.gov Phone: 802-798-9002

Kathleen Smith for Barre and Morrisville offices

Email: Kathleen.D.Smith@vermont.gov Phone: 802-735-6043

Jessica Holmes for Burlington and Middlebury offices

Email: jessica.holmes@vermont.gov Phone: 802-585-5186

Laurie Pion for St Albans and Newport offices

Email: Laurine.Pion@vermont.gov Phone: 802-798-9578

Vacant for St Johnsbury and Hartford offices.
Contact Karen Denniston until vacancy is filled.

Email: Karen.Denniston@vermont.gov Phone: 802-371-8563

Sarah Butterfield for Bennington and Rutland offices

Email: Sarah.R.Butterfield@vermont.gov Phone: 802-585-6550

Questions?

Please raise your virtual hand, or type your question in the chat

Next Meeting: January 2025

Thank you for joining us!