

10/29/2024 Task Force Recommendations from Christopher Luras (VLCT), Shelby Lebarron (Lived Experience Expert), Brenda Siegel (VCIL Rep and Executive Director of End Homelessness Vermont):

Service and Support Funding Recommendations:

We recommend that funding be proportional to the need in each district. This should represent an increase in overall funding, not a reduction in funding in any district. For example, if one district has 25% of people in the GA program and Overall Homelessness Numbers in CE (assuming that the state is also participating in coordinated entry), then the funding distribution should match that. We also recommend that there be a part of the funding that is individualized, in that it follows the individual or household.

Innovation, new/small non profits and programs, non categorical case management, and statewide programs should all have significant funding opportunities. We recognize this as a gap in the current funding model. There must be opportunities for creativity in addressing this crisis.

There should be some funding sources that are not HUD specific so that non categorical case management and new service models can help address unique and current needs.

All funding should require that lead agencies must engage with people in their district, this can include a partnership with an org that specialized in those needs. In these cases that should come with funding. No individual or household should be refused services. No reject policy should be a standard requirement for all lead agencies. All lead agencies should ensure any individual who's needs they are not able to meet is provided with case management that fits the needs of the individual or household. Funding should be commensurate with this requirement.

Permanent Housing Alternative Voucher Proposal:

We further recommend an alternative state funded rental subsidy for households and individuals that either don't qualify for section 8 or are on the waiting list and need a gap subsidy. For some this would be ongoing and for some this would be only until they move to the top of the section 8 list. Additionally, if a household can find an apartment that meets VSHA or Rent Reasonableness standards for price of rent, but a household is unable to obtain a voucher at that time or they are being delayed or restricted by portability guidelines, in that district or does not qualify currently than, GA monies should be used to supplement section 8 and other housing voucher options.

People Centered District Guidelines:

Individuals experiencing homelessness should be given agency and treated with value. The current program disregards that agency and takes choice away from individuals.

We recommend that people have the opportunity to remain sheltered in the district where their services, families and resources are without being given a false choice to be relocated or not, especially to a district who has been disproportionately burdened by the homelessness and housing crisis.

There should be a strategic plan that keeps people sheltered in non congregate settings in their home district, without leaving households and individuals with periods of being unsheltered. The Agency Of Human Services should develop habitability standards to support opportunities for hotels to cure habitability issues in a set time frame prior to such hotels becoming “no new household hotels”. This will prevent the loss of rooms in districts that often leads to district transitions.

We recommend that those who are in search of housing and have been relocated through the GA program to a non preferred district or one that they don't consider home, be given preference and consistent opportunity to return to their home district if they choose. Currently people who have housing choice vouchers in a particular district, rather than VSHA, can't easily take opportunities to return to preferred districts through permanent housing options due to portability restrictions.

In any move from one district to another, households should not be disconnected from their current services and supports, before they can be connected to services and support in the new or returning district. If a household is changing districts they shall be connected to a provider who can weave the transition of services between districts. This will make district transition more successful for households, providers and communities. All service connections should be made in a trauma informed and client centered way.

Habitability Standards:

All participating hotels should be entered into an agreement that requires habitability standards, lays out payment timelines for invoices and gives opportunities for hotels to cure problems. This should include different levels of habitability issues and length of time that will be given for each violation before that room is shut down. Only where required for safety, should a hotel be subject to “no new households” before being given the opportunity to cure.