

Dear Colleagues,

We wish to inform you of significant changes to the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program that will take effect on July 1, 2024, due to new legislation.

Some of the changes will significantly impact households experiencing homelessness that you might be serving. Under this new law, individuals must meet specific eligibility criteria to qualify for a maximum of 80 nights of assistance from the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program. Consequently, not all individuals experiencing homelessness will be eligible for this program. Only those who meet one of the following eligibility criteria will be offered emergency housing assistance.

- Age 65+
- Has a disability (SSI, SSDI, Medical Variance form)
- Families with child(ren) age 19 and under
- Pregnant
- Death of a spouse, domestic partner, minor child
- Experienced a natural disaster.
- Court ordered or constructive eviction (no fault of the household)
- Experienced domestic and similar dangerous violence

A small number of Vermonters (about 19 households) currently receiving assistance from the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program will no longer be eligible after July 1st, because they are between the age of 60-64 and no longer meet the age criteria or are households without a child in the home. This list has been shared with Field Services to try and provide additional support.

Some households may choose to leave the program immediately to use their 80 days at another time, while others may stay in to use their full 80 days immediately and will run out of days in mid-September.

The legislation also places a cap on the number of rooms the program can utilize. Specifically, in the "warm weather" months from September 15, 2024, to November 30, 2024, and from April 1, 2025, to June 30, 2025, the program will be limited to using a maximum of 1,100 hotel or motel rooms statewide. Between December 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025 ("adverse weather"), the room cap is lifted, and nights do not count toward the 80-day limit.



The law states that only households with a member who meets one of the eligibility criteria above will be offered emergency housing assistance in a motel/hotel, meaning that some people experiencing homelessness will not be eligible for a hotel room.

Another requirement pertains to case management for clients experiencing homelessness. According to the law, all case managers affiliated with the Agency of Human Services, whether state employees or contractors, must assist clients in securing appropriate housing. More information will be provided around this expectation, and there will be training opportunities for those without housing expertise.

The Economic Service Division intends to share these changes broadly and educate households about their choices. If you work with someone who is currently receiving assistance from the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program, please share these changes with them. We also ask that you to share this letter with any providers you work with.

If clients you are working with have questions about the program or eligibility determination, please contact the Economic Services Division at 1-800-775-0506.

We welcome your assistance and partnership in serving our common clients. If your department, division or partners have specific questions about these changes, or you have thoughts about how we can work together to help address homelessness in Vermont, I would be happy to arrange a meeting to discuss them.

Sincerely,

Miranda Gray, Deputy Commissioner
Economic Services Division, DCF

