

## DCF Housing Open Office Hours

Monday, July 3, 2023

- Reminder that notes will be posted on this website - <https://dcf.vermont.gov/Addressing-and-Preventing-Unsheltered-Homelessness>
- Economic Services Division Updates
  - ESD will post data updates later this week or early next week to reflect the new changes (post-6/30).
  - Emergency Rules were filed on Friday and will be posted to the website. An overview of changes was provided, and some examples were discussed. Q&A:
    - Question: Who will be conducting the review of whether the housing is appropriate? Answer: DCF will enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with either the VT Department of Health or VT Department of Mental Health make the determination. As a follow up, this was further clarified that this is related to the offer of an alternative to a motel program. The household has 48 hours to respond and there is a process if the household does not feel the offer is suitable.
    - Question: Is there any clarification on how hospitalization or participation in rehab programs will impact eligibility? Answer: Once exited households will no longer be eligible for the “pandemic era cohort”, but they could then apply for the standard GA Housing Program and may be eligible for 28 or 84 days.
    - Question: What are the standards/expectations for what determines a safe, appropriate option? Answer: The standards are different, there is a distinction as the rules, regulations are different that govern those types of establishments/housing.
    - Question: What is the current grievance process? Answer: There is a fair hearing process. The process is outlined in the denial notice that is given to clients when housing is denied.
      - Follow up question: What is the process if they have concerns about the quality of the lodging? Answer: That is a complaint filed through the VT Department of Health. Also, at the end of the authorization a client can ask to be moved to a different hotel.
    - Follow Up: The link to the emergency rules will be posted and shared through VT Coalition to End Homelessness (VCEH) and Chittenden County Homeless Alliance (CCHA).
    - Question: There is eligibility for those who experience the loss of a spouse, what about the loss of a parent? Answer: The rules only contemplate the loss of spouse or minor child, not the loss of a parent. Potentially a child who lost a parent could qualify under eviction this scenario would have to be sent to ESD to review.
  - Scenario 1) Household is accepted by a landlord for an apartment. They have 48 hours to decide whether to accept that or not. If they accept, great and they have 14 days of transition time to support the move. If they decide not to accept it their participation in the “pandemic era program” would end at the date of current authorization. They could re-apply for regular GA Emergency Housing if they are eligible. If they feel like the offer is not suitable there is a process for review (MOU with DMH or VDH).

- Question: What if it is a short-term arrangement such as 30 days in a residential treatment program? Answer: If the household accepts it, they will have the opportunity when discharged to apply with the regular GA Emergency Housing program and they may be eligible for 28 or 84 days.
    - Question: What about the fact that facilities decline admission if there is not housing to return to? Answer: AHS can investigate this and can work with providers.
    - Question: When does the 48 hours start? Answer: When the option is made available, 48 hours to accept or decline the offer. If the household accepts the offer, GA allows for a period of overlap (14 days).
    - Question: Who is finding housing alternatives? Answer: Part of the rules include engagement with Coordinated Entry (<https://helpingtohousevt.org/whatwedo/coordinatedentry/>) and housing case management. Those providers will be working with the household in the housing search process. Field Services through a contract is looking to have some additional capacity to work with households and providers for tracking purposes as there are housing options referenced in the legislation that extend beyond options traditionally captured through Coordinated Entry.
  - Question: Are there still “self housing days,” for instance in the past everyone had to pay on Sundays. Answer: There is the requirement for 30% income contribution. “Self-housing days” as described was not part of the program in the past. The emergency rules include 30% contribution now based upon the rate of the hotel you are currently in (this is a change from the pre-pandemic GA rules).- How frequently income contributions are determined depends on how income is received by the client (weekly, monthly). ESD calculates the number of nights that will not be covered and that impacts how many nights will not be paid for by the state, this is communicated to the hotel and guest to let them know when their authorization will restart. For example, if a house is paid on August 1<sup>st</sup> and 30% is equivalent to 2 nights then the future authorization will start on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. The household can either stay and self-pay or leave the hotel until the authorization starts.
  - Question: Is documentation of income required and how is that collected? Answer: Yes, it is required for 30 days and can be submitted in person or uploaded.
  - Question: If a household is in Bennington and receiving services there but an emergency shelter bed is available in Barre, what are the requirements? Answer: The rule is set up generally not to require households to accept beds or options out of district. This varies on the circumstances as not all treatment options are available in each district. **Post meeting note, this was not accurate, there is no in district exception. The rules do not include language that households must be offered placements in their home districts.**
  - General Suggestion: ESD should consider including poor air quality as part of the Adverse Weather Conditions.
  - General Suggestion: Suggest ESD update the grievance policy, VDH compliance process at motels.
- A summary of the Letters of Interest was posted to the general website, the summary is available here <https://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/docs/LOI%20Summary%20June%202023.pdf>.
  - Question: What is the update on the RFP regarding emergency shelter options? Answer: At the time that was issued, there was not an Executive Order and legislation looked different from what was passed in June. As the circumstances have changed the state is

not moving forward to explore that work. It is possible that if things shift in the future the state may enter into contracts for emergency shelters or specifically just staffing for existing emergency shelters.