

**Task Force Recommendation: 10/07/2024 Shelby Lebarron (Lived Experience Expert), Amy Johnson (Vermont Care Partners), Brenda Siegel (VCIL Representative and EHVT ED)**

**Day Limits:**

Those who meet eligibility requirements qualify for up to 6 months. After 6 months, there is a standardized review process if the person remains in need of GA Emergency Housing, with an appointed committee alongside their care team. The purpose of the review process is not to exit people from the program, but rather to review what has been done and identify what changes need to be made or what additional supports could be helpful in order to address barriers that have prevented the household from being housed. Understanding that on some occasions the only barrier will be lack of appropriate housing stock, in which case, households will continue with their current plan. This would prevent unsheltered homelessness and increase support to permanent housing while reducing reliance on GA Emergency Housing.

**Notification and Communication:**

**Benefit Award Letter:**

Households will receive a benefit letter and will be notified writing at each recertification of their benefit, time remain, recertification date and any additional requirements that they need to complete. All households will be given adequate time while remaining sheltered to meet any documentation requirements. ESD or AHS Field Services Coordinators will provide to the local lead agency notifications for everyone's 6 month review.

**Programmatic Changes:**

Any changes to the program itself or benefit will be noticed with no less than thirty days notice so that households have the chance to both prepare and appeal decisions related to emergency housing.

**Denial Letters:**

Denial letters will be issued at each denial and should a denial letter not be issued, there will be a 10 day grace period of shelter, to allow notice of the denial to the household.

**Provider Supports**

Service providers need significant additional funding to carry out increased engagement with households and provide robust wrap around services. There needs to be increased investment in the service sector so that providers can recruit and retain support staff.

Additionally, each households care team should be able to identify that they are meeting regularly to address hurdles and barriers to housing and service support. Regularly this care team should identify when it is necessary to bring additional providers or state agencies on board to trouble shoot barriers to access.

A housing first model should be implemented to ensure that services are robustly available, but not required in order to create a client centered and client directed model of care. When necessary non traditional case management should be implemented to address barriers.

At any point of emergency, or significant loss of emergency shelter, area agencies should have an emergency plan in place with the purpose of trouble shooting high risk households.

## **Eligibility**

The current budget has already identified the most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness. It is critical to utilize the ADA's definition of disability as that is the federal standard on identifying disability and is the HUD definition as well. The decision on if the disability or medical condition warrant a need to be sheltered should be between the medical providers and the individuals. They are certainly the most qualified to make that determination.

We recommend increasing access to youth. In addition to minor adjustments on budget language as discussed in the 9/17/2024 and we will send in detail following this meeting.

There should be no income contribution due to the majority of people who are in the program having significantly low incomes. The income contribution is difficult to manage and prevents available resources for housing. If there is an income contribution, it should follow a standard similar or identical to the Section 8 calculation of any income contribution and that contribution should go toward savings to access to housing needs, like furniture, kitchen supplies, basic needs or returned to household after exit. We will

provide the HUD Section 8 model for calculating income contribution following this meeting.

There should be no resource test for emergency housing. A resource test prevents people with limited resources from having what they need to access permanent housing. There is significant data that shows that resource tests are prohibitive to breaking the cycle of poverty.

### **Case Management and Coordinated Entry**

We recommend using the budget language which allowed for non traditional case management alternatives.

### **Room Cap**

There should be no room cap. It does not make sense and creates complicated barriers that could have catastrophic outcomes to accessing emergency shelter. Instead we propose increased funding and support to create additional non congregate shelter, transitional housing and permanent housing which will reduce our reliance on GA Emergency Shelter over time, providing a humane and just transition from the GA Emergency Shelter Program.