

STATE OF VERMONT
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES

DCF

Department for Children and Families

Nicole Tousignant

BULLETIN NO.: B23-02

FROM: Nicole Tousignant, Economic Benefits Director
Economic Services Division

DATE: 12/21/2022

SUBJECT: General Assistance Procedures

CHANGES ADOPTED EFFECTIVE 01/01/2023

INSTRUCTIONS

- Maintain Manual - See instructions below.
- Proposed Regulation - Retain bulletin and attachments until you receive Manual Maintenance Bulletin: _____
- Information or Instructions - Retain Until _____

MANUAL REFERENCE(S):

TOC P-2600 P-2600

This is a new procedure to outline the Reach Up Vermont Rental Subsidy pilot project.

Manual Maintenance

Text highlighted in gray has been updated.

General Assistance Procedures

Remove

Insert

P-2600 TOC (10-08)

Nothing

Nothing

P-2696 (23-02)

P-2696 Reach Up - Vermont Rental Subsidy Program (23-02)

The Reach Up – Vermont Rental Subsidy Program (RUVRS) is a pilot housing assistance program within the General Assistance program to provide short-term rental assistance to Reach Up participants who have exited the Reach Up Emergency Rental Assistance (RUERA) program and whose monthly income would otherwise be insufficient to afford the cost of rent for the unit they are currently residing in. RUVRS is intended to provide rental assistance and case management services for up to 12 months while the household is actively working to increase their income or secure other forms of longer-term affordable housing.

A. Selection

To determine which households will be given the opportunity to participate in RUVRS, the Reach Up Program will select households who are most at risk of becoming homeless by the following steps:

1. The program will compile a list of all households who exited the RUERA program due to exhausting the 18-month limit on assistance.
2. Then, the program will determine which households are still active or have been active on Reach Up, Reach First, Post-secondary education and Reach Ahead within the last 2 months.
3. If the household's current rental unit size and rent obligation is at or below the VSHA voucher payment standard, the household will remain on the list to be further analyzed.
4. The list of households will be sent to the Reach Up Supervisors and Case Managers to identify those households currently in the eviction process due to non-payment of rent and for whom receiving a voucher could potentially avoid eviction.
 - a. Of those who are being evicted for non-payment of rent, the list will be prioritized based on total household income vs rent ratio. Those with the highest rent to income ratio will be given priority over those with a lower rent to income ratio. Then, single parent households will be given priority over multi-parent household. Then, those who have the highest number of children in the household will be given priority over households with less children. Then, households with all younger children (ages 0-12) in the home will be given priority over households with both younger (0-12) and older children (13-19), and least priority to those households with just older children (13-19).

- b. Case Managers may add additional notes for extenuating hardship, such as medical needs or lack of family support, to be considered by the Director in determining the household's priority.
5. If more households qualify for selection than available RUVRS vouchers, a random sample selector will be used to identify households for selection.
6. Once the list of households is determined to be pre-eligible based on the above steps, the selection list will be sent to the Reach Up Case Managers who will:
 - a. Contact the households and explain the RUVRS program and its requirements
 - b. Note if participant is or is not interested in the program
 - c. Contact the participant's landlord and explain the RUVRS program and its requirements
 - d. Note if the landlord is or is not interested in the program

B. Initial Eligibility

To qualify for RUVRS, applicants must meet all the following eligibility criteria:

1. Must be receiving, or exited within the last 2 months Reach Up, Reach First, Post-Secondary Education or Reach Ahead and is in the process of reapplying.
2. At the time of the voucher being issued, the family must be active and in good standing with Reach Up, Reach First, PSE or Reach Ahead;
3. Currently have housing and is in risk of losing it;
4. Must be eligible for section 8 HUD voucher;
5. Must be in compliance with all General Assistance and Reach Up Program requirements.
6. The rental unit size is in following ratio to the persons in the household:

Rental Unit Size	Persons in Household
1 Bedroom	1-2
2 Bedrooms	2-4
3 Bedrooms	3-6
4 Bedrooms	4-8
5 Bedrooms	6-10

The Department will assign one bedroom for each two persons within the household, except in the following circumstances:

- a. Persons of different generations and unrelated adults will be allocated a separate bedroom.
 - b. Live-in aides will be allocated a separate bedroom.
 - c. Children, in the Department's custody not currently living with the family, but likely to be reunified within 180 days will be included in the household for the purposes of determining rental unit size.
7. RUVRS participants are responsible for paying the greater of 30 percent of their gross monthly income or the portion minimum toward their rental costs. The portion minimum for rental units in Chittenden County is \$232 and \$198 for outside of Chittenden County.
8. The participants' ongoing rent must not exceed the allowable limits. The following table shows the maximum allowable rent plus utilities a participant may pay while receiving RUVRS rental assistance:

Vermont State Housing Authority Voucher Payment Standards effective 12/1/2022

Revised 10.26.2022

Fair Market Rent Area Name	County / Town	0 bedroom	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4 bedroom
Addison County, VT	All towns	930	1054	1340	1703	1800
Bennington County, VT	All towns	933	974	1232	1600	1735
Burlington-South Burlington, VT MSA	All towns	1252	1396	1800	2225	2441
Caledonia County, VT	All towns	972	1014	1144	1400	1900
Essex County, VT	All towns	876	895	1011	1371	1402
Franklin County	All towns	1252	1350	1785	2220	2430
Grand Isle County	All towns	1139	1300	1628	2025	2208
Lamoille County, VT	All towns	1048	1056	1389	1852	1867
Orange County, VT	All towns except exception town	852	942	1200	1500	1662
Orange County Exception Town	Randolph	900	1028	1300	1575	1750
Orleans County, VT	All towns	847	1012	1143	1489	1581
Rutland County, VT	All towns	950	1002	1196	1584	1825
Washington County, VT	All towns except for exception towns	922	1075	1350	1715	1825
Washington County Exception Towns	Waterbury, Waterbury Center, Duxbury, Moretown, Waitsfield, Warren, Northfield, Montpelier, and Berlin	950	1100	1380	1745	1861
Windham County, VT	All towns	881	1048	1307	1500	1700
Windsor County, VT	All towns	915	1075	1252	1745	1788

PIH Notice 2022-30

Subject: Extension of Certain Regulatory Waivers for the Housing Choice Voucher (including Mainstream) Program
 Voucher Tenancy: New Payment Standard Amount [Expires 12/31/2023]

PHAs may establish payment standards from 111 to 120 percent of applicable FMR

The following is used to estimate monthly costs for heat, hot water, and electricity when these are not included as part of the monthly rent. Total monthly costs for rent plus these utilities may not exceed the figure given on the monthly payment standard chart:

Single Family Unity type:

Allowances for Tenant Furnished Utilities and Other Services		U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Public and Indian Housing					
Vermont State Housing Authority		Single Family					effective 12/01/2022 amended 11.21.22
Utility or Service		Monthly Dollar Allowances					
		0 BR	1 BR	2 BR	3 BR	4 BR	5 BR
Heating	a. Natural Gas	\$ 80	\$ 90	\$ 101	\$ 113	\$ 124	\$ 136
	b. Bottle Gas	\$ 143	\$ 169	\$ 198	\$ 228	\$ 258	\$ 287
	c. Electric Resistance	\$ 110	\$ 126	\$ 145	\$ 164	\$ 183	\$ 202
	d. Electric Heat Pump	\$ 49	\$ 58	\$ 69	\$ 77	\$ 86	\$ 94
	e. Fuel Oil/Kerosene	\$ 167	\$ 196	\$ 231	\$ 265	\$ 299	\$ 334
	f. Firewood/Pellets	\$ 109	\$ 127	\$ 150	\$ 172	\$ 194	\$ 217
Cooking	a. Natural Gas	\$ 4	\$ 4	\$ 6	\$ 8	\$ 10	\$ 12
	b. Bottle Gas	\$ 10	\$ 11	\$ 16	\$ 21	\$ 26	\$ 31
	c. Electric	\$ 8	\$ 9	\$ 13	\$ 17	\$ 21	\$ 25
	d. Other	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other Electric	\$ 43	\$ 50	\$ 70	\$ 89	\$ 109	\$ 128	
Air Conditioning	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	
Water Heating	a. Natural Gas	\$ 12	\$ 14	\$ 20	\$ 26	\$ 32	\$ 39
	b. Bottle Gas	\$ 30	\$ 36	\$ 52	\$ 68	\$ 84	\$ 100
	c. Electric	\$ 26	\$ 31	\$ 39	\$ 48	\$ 56	\$ 65
	d. Fuel Oil/Kerosene	\$ 35	\$ 42	\$ 60	\$ 79	\$ 97	\$ 116
Water/Sewer	\$ 56	\$ 59	\$ 79	\$ 108	\$ 137	\$ 166	
Trash Collection	\$ 52	\$ 52	\$ 52	\$ 52	\$ 52	\$ 52	
Range/Microwave							
Refrigerator							
Other -- specify							

Multi Family Unity type:

Allowances for Tenant Furnished Utilities and Other Services		U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Public and Indian Housing					
Vermont State Housing Authority		Multi Family					effective 12/01/22, amended 11.21.22
Utility or Service		Monthly Dollar Allowances					
		0 BR	1 BR	2 BR	3 BR	4 BR	5 BR
Heating	a. Natural Gas	\$ 94	\$ 106	\$ 113	\$ 119	\$ 126	\$ 132
	b. Bottle Gas	\$ 180	\$ 212	\$ 229	\$ 245	\$ 262	\$ 278
	c. Electric Resistance	\$ 73	\$ 82	\$ 103	\$ 124	\$ 145	\$ 166
	d. Electric Heat Pump	\$ 44	\$ 52	\$ 62	\$ 69	\$ 77	\$ 85
	e. Fuel Oil/Kerosene	\$ 210	\$ 247	\$ 266	\$ 285	\$ 304	\$ 323
	f. Firewood/Pellets	\$ 137	\$ 161	\$ 173	\$ 185	\$ 198	\$ 210
Cooking	a. Natural Gas	\$ 4	\$ 4	\$ 6	\$ 8	\$ 10	\$ 12
	b. Bottle Gas	\$ 10	\$ 11	\$ 16	\$ 21	\$ 26	\$ 31
	c. Electric	\$ 8	\$ 9	\$ 13	\$ 17	\$ 21	\$ 25
	d. Other	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other Electric		\$ 35	\$ 42	\$ 58	\$ 74	\$ 90	\$ 107
Air Conditioning		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Water Heating	a. Natural Gas	\$ 12	\$ 14	\$ 20	\$ 26	\$ 32	\$ 39
	b. Bottle Gas	\$ 30	\$ 36	\$ 52	\$ 68	\$ 84	\$ 100
	c. Electric	\$ 26	\$ 31	\$ 39	\$ 48	\$ 56	\$ 65
	d. Fuel Oil/Kerosene	\$ 35	\$ 42	\$ 60	\$ 79	\$ 97	\$ 116
Water/Sewer		\$ 56	\$ 59	\$ 79	\$ 108	\$ 137	\$ 166
Trash Collection		\$ 52	\$ 52	\$ 52	\$ 52	\$ 52	\$ 52
Range/Microwave							
Refrigerator							
Other -- specify							

9. The rental unit must meet the criteria for size and maximum allowable rent.
10. Landlord must agree to accept the RUVRS voucher.
11. The Landlord must agree to a housing inspection to be completed within 3 months from the time of the voucher approval. If the inspection does not pass the standards outlined by HUD guidelines, the landlord will have 3 months to complete any upgrades.
 - a. If the work is incomplete by the end of the 3 months, the Department will end the assistance without any extensions.

C. Application

Households selected for participation in the program are not required to complete an application for the RUVRS program as all information necessary to determine initial eligibility is available to the Department when vouchers become available. If the information at the selection phase does not match the participant's current circumstances, the Department will request verification of inconsistent information. The Department will deny the household's request to participate in the program if the requested verification is not received within 30 days.

D. Final Approval

1. To obtain final approval for RUVRS rental assistance, the household must submit the following documentation to the Department:
 - a. Housing inspection stating that the rental unit has passed inspection, or that it has been scheduled within the next 3 months
 - b. Executed **current** lease agreement, unless it was already provided to the Department for the Emergency Rental Assistance program (ERA).
 - c. **Shelter Verification Form, 202H**
 - d. Completed VRS lease addendum;
 - e. Signed release for the Department to share and obtain information from VSHA; and
 - f. W-9 form submitted by the landlord if the Department is not already in possession of one.
2. The Department shall deny the household's request to participate in the program if the above documentation is not accurately completed and received within 15 days of notice of eligibility.
3. The household's portion of the rent shall be prorated for the first month if the lease term does not begin on the first of the month according to the following procedure:
 - a. Determine the prorated rent by multiplying the cost per day by the number of days being prorated.
 - b. Determine the percentage of total monthly rent the household's portion represents.

- c. The household's prorated portion is equal to the percentage above multiplied by the prorated rent.

E. Ongoing Eligibility

RUVRS rental assistance shall continue for 12 months unless:

1. Housing inspection is not completed within the first 3 months; or any necessary work is not completed within 3 months from the time of inspection.
2. Household receives another housing subsidy or voucher (e.g. Section 8, Family Unification Voucher);
3. Household becomes ineligible for Section 8 rental assistance pursuant to HUD regulations;
4. Household is evicted (excluding no cause or sold property evictions pursuant to 9 V.S.A. § 4467);
5. Household is not working with their housing support worker; unless participant has good cause;
6. Household is sanctioned under the Reach Up program for three or more months; or
7. Household has not paid their portion of the rent for three or more consecutive months.

F. Change of Circumstances

RUVRS recipients are required to report any change in circumstances within 15 days to the Department.

1. Income

When there is a change in household income, the household portion will be recalculated to reflect 30 percent of gross monthly household income or the portion minimum (see P-2695(D)(1)(a)).

2. Household Composition

If the head of household leaves the household for more than one calendar month, RUVRS rental assistance will be terminated. At the Department's discretion, RUVRS rental assistance may continue if there are extenuating circumstances.

3. Relocation

Clients may relocate once during the initial 12 months. The new residence must meet all the requirements with respect to rental unit size and maximum allowable rent. The documentation listed in P-2695(E)(1) must be submitted within 15 days of notifying the Department that a new rental unit has been located. If the client would like to relocate to another district, the housing review team located in the new district must approve the request. The Department shall terminate rental assistance for clients who relocate more than once within the initial 12-months. The Department shall terminate rental assistance for clients who relocate during an extension period. At the Department's discretion, RUVRS rental assistance may continue if there are extenuating circumstances.

G. Fair Hearings and Deputy Commissioner Review

1. Fair Hearings

An applicant or recipient may file a request for a fair hearing with the Human Services Board pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 3091. If the individual is within the first 12 months of receiving rental assistance, assistance shall continue without change if the individual requests a hearing before the effective date of the reduction or termination of benefits and wishes to have assistance continue during the fair hearing process. Assistance shall not continue beyond 12 months. If assistance continues at the same level and the Human Services Board affirms the Department, any overpayment received by the individual pending the fair hearing will be subject to recoupment.

2. Deputy Commissioner Review

Applicants or recipients may request that the Deputy Commissioner, or his or her designee, review the Department's decision to deny or terminate assistance. Requests for review must be submitted to the Department within 15 days of the date of the notice. The Deputy Commissioner's decision may be appealed to the Human Services Board pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 3091 and subsection (1) above.