

STATE OF VERMONT
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES

DCF

Department for Children and Families

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BULLETIN NO.: 24-10

FROM: Miranda Gray, Deputy Commissioner
Economic Services Division

DATE: 05/30/24

SUBJECT: Reach Up Services Procedure

CHANGES ADOPTED EFFECTIVE 05/30/24

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):

P-2300

Provides information and resources about the scope and boundaries within housing case management that the Reach Up program may work with a family.

Manual Maintenance

Significant changes are indicated by highlighting text in gray.

Reach Up Services Procedure

Remove

Nothing

Insert

P-2360 (24-10)

P-2360 HOUSING CASE MANAGEMENT AND REACH UP (24-10)

General scope and boundaries of housing case management for Reach Up Case Managers

Reach Up Case Managers (RUCMs) will take on the role of housing case manager for the families that they work with when other resources are not available.

Other resources not available could mean:

- the local housing partner does not have capacity to take on the role at all, or
- the wait list to get enrolled with other services would hinder the family from moving forward with their housing plan.

RUCMs will reach out to local housing partners to explore their capacity to work with a family that receives Reach Up and has housing related needs. Referrals should continue to be explored and made to these organizations in hopes of eventually transitioning the housing case management to them.

Reach Up housing case management

The Reach Up program utilizes a coaching model to empower families to identify their goals, create plans and take steps to reach those goals. Each family is unique, with their own strengths and facing a variety of obstacles.

Depending on the family's unique situation, a Reach Up case manager providing housing case management may:

- share housing resources with families,
- provide housing application assistance,
- make referrals to and attempt to collaborate with other housing partners,
- educate about how to maintain a successful tenancy and basic tenant rights, and
- coach participants to find solutions to problems related to their housing.

What limits do Reach Up Case Managers have as housing case managers:

- Work with families on a variety of goals—this means goals other than housing may take priority at times,

- Receive an overview of housing related training, but are not housing experts, that's why we look to partner with others who are more knowledgeable in the world of housing,
- Cannot provide legal advice, but can refer to VT Legal Aid,
- Work with many families with different needs, and therefore cannot be everything for everyone,
- Do not in the end control what families choose to do.

Sharing information with a landlord

In general follow the [Confidentiality and Information Sharing Guidance](#) when sharing information with a family's landlord or potential landlord. Obtain a signed release of information and talk with the family about what type of information is okay to share.

If a release is not on file, without confirming or denying that you work with a participant, take the information the landlord wishes to share, and follow up as needed. (See below when signing on a housing case manager for certain vouchers.)

Information when working with a family that is staying in GA housing

For those staying in GA hotel it is an expectation that families engage in their own search for and accept any available alternative housing placements to continue GA housing assistance. The preference will be that families are referred to the local Coordinated Entry assessment partner. The goal is for all families that are staying in a GA hotel to have a completed CE Assessment.

- If it is known that a referral was not made, attempt to make the referral. If the family is not engaged with CE, their RUCM should offer housing case management.
 - When a RUCM is working on housing goals with a family staying in a GA hotel enter a CATN at least one time per month indicating this work is being done.

Ex. *PARTICIPANT NAME* is working with RUCM on housing goals.

- This can include households receiving Reach Up when the parent receives SSI and caretaker child only households. The preference would be for these

families to work with CE but RUCMs can also provide housing case management.

- If CE is able to take on housing case management after the RUCM has started working with the family on housing related issues, transfer the housing case management to the local housing partner.

Information when working with specific vouchers such as VRS, RU-VRS, HOME and FUP

Housing case management is a requirement for the following vouchers:

- Family Unification Program (FUP),
- Reach Up – Vermont Rental Subsidy (RU-VRS),
- Vermont Rental Subsidy (VRS) and
- HOME vouchers.

If a family receiving Reach Up is eligible for one of these vouchers, and they are not connected with a local housing partner, a RUCM can sign off as the housing case manager/housing support worker.

Specific requirements of each voucher

When providing housing case management and a voucher has been issued for one of the following types of vouchers, FUP, VRS, RU-VRS, HOME, it is important to continue to provide housing case management even if Reach Up ends until someone else takes on that role or the specific voucher program ends.

A District Spreadsheet will be kept that shows which families received which of these vouchers. VRS and RU-VRS active lists will be sent monthly to supervisors. RUCMs will have to add the families they are working with for FUP and HOME vouchers.

RUCMs will do the best they can to keep up with the requirements of each type of voucher, while balancing the needs of the rest of their caseload. Review with Reach Up supervisor during regular supervision. RUCMs will send out an engagement letter to families that have closed Reach Up but still maintain contact with their case manager based on voucher requirements.

Fillable Engagement letter to tenant: [click here](#).

Non-fillable Engagement letter to tenant (copy text to district letterhead if preferred): [click here](#).

Type of Voucher	Monthly Contact Required	Create Plan for when voucher ends	Continue housing case management even if close RU	Housing work even if not primary RU goal	Monthly in person appointment at participant home	Act as contact for landlord regarding issues
VRS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RU-VRS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
FUP	Yes—for 12 months	N/A	Yes	No	No	Yes
HOME	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No—must meet monthly, but not in person	Yes

Contact with landlord

For RU-VRS and VRS, the landlord is informed of who the housing case manager is when they sign the lease addendum. The landlord may not be aware that there is a housing case manager when a FUP voucher is issued. When a RUCM signs off as the housing case manager for any of these vouchers. Obtain a signed release of information from the participant and give the landlord a copy of the Letter to Landlord either in person, or via mail or email.

Fillable Letter to Landlord: [click here](#).

Non-fillable (copy text to district letterhead if preferred): [click here](#).

Regular contact with the landlord is not required for these vouchers unless there is an identified issue.

When specific voucher case management requirements must end

If housing case management must end before the family switches to a long-term voucher or completes the requirements for the voucher, make sure to inform the family and the organization issuing the voucher that case management is ending so appropriate steps can be taken. Best practice is to share this information in writing. It should also be documented in case notes.

Housing case management might end for the following reasons:

- family relocates,
- lack of engagement.

Lack of engagement

Lack of engagement around housing case management could mean the family:

- loses contact with case manager,
- refuses to meet over phone, in person or virtually,
- insists they do not want to complete any other housing applications/accept housing related referrals, or
- does not follow up on specific housing related tasks after multiple attempts.

When families are not engaged in housing related work, try the following and document in case notes:

- Provide information about resources (applications for other subsidies or housing opportunities, opportunities to increase income/afford rent)
- Share information in a variety of ways (paper copies, electronic links, 3-way meetings with other service providers)
- Revisit resources at least once a month, if not every time you meet
- Ask family to explain their understanding of what happens when voucher ends
- Encourage the family to consider if not working on their housing issues is getting in the way of their other goals and coach them to explore this discrepancy.

Some examples of questions to uncover discrepancy:

- *What is your biggest struggle right now?*
- *What do you want most for your family in six months?*
- *How does working on your current goal help you accomplish what you want for your family?*
- *How might stable housing improve your situation?*

Specific voucher has not been issued and case management must end

If the family is only in the application process and a voucher has not been issued, but housing case management can no longer be offered (family has moved, Reach Up has closed, family is not following through on application process), inform the family and the organization issuing the voucher, and

explain that if another organization cannot take on the role of housing case manager, the application will have to be withdrawn. Again—best practice is to share this information in writing.

Transferring housing case management to a different RUCM

If housing case management must transfer to a different RUCM, inform the family, the organization issuing a specific voucher, and the landlord.

Assess what the family's current needs are around housing. During this time of transition explore if the local housing partner could take on the housing case management with the family.

Housing case management resources

Resources, information and training links are available here, on the Case Management SharePoint site (scroll down the page) under "Reach Up Housing Resources" Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) and "General Housing Resources". [Reach Up - Case Management \(Services\) \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

The Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness (VCEH) also offers a variety of online training modules on housing related issues. [VCEH Online Training Modules - Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness \(helpingtohousevt.org\)](#)

Finding local rental and landlord information

Reach Up case managers can reach out to their local [Coordinated Entry \(CE\)](#) lead agency for landlord lists and also their [local VSHA field rep](#). If you have trouble connecting to your local field rep, contact RUCO for help.

Finding standards related to vouchers

Refer to the Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) website for up-to-date information:

- **Income Limits** – [Go here](#)
- **Fair Market Rents** – [Go here](#)
- **Voucher Payment Standards** – [Go here](#)
- **Section 8 Single-Family Utilities Worksheet** – [Go here](#)
- **Section 8 Multi-Family Utilities Worksheet** – [Go here](#)

Locating funding to help with move in costs and arrears

- Reach Up Support Services are not able to help with move in costs or rental arrears.

- Assist participants with applying for Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP) funding for move in costs, debts owed, and other items essential to meeting their housing plan goals. Link to [Organizations that received HOP Awards.](#)
- Utilize [Your Money, Your Goals](#) and incentivize when able. This helps participants pay off these debts.
- If the debt was incurred or the issue occurred while the family had a subsidy you can typically have them agree to a plan with the housing authority or utility company to get back into good standing. It may be a payback agreement or an anger management class, community service, etc. but usually if they show progress toward the goal, they can be eligible for assistance again even before the debt is paid in full.