

STATE OF VERMONT
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES

DCF

Department for Children and Families

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BULLETIN NO.: 23-16

FROM: Miranda Gray, Deputy Commissioner
Economic Services Division

DATE: 08/30/23

SUBJECT: Vermont Rental Subsidy Program Procedures

CHANGES ADOPTED EFFECTIVE 09/01/23

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-2600

The purpose of this bulletin is to outline the initial and ongoing eligibility criteria for applicants and recipients of rental assistance through the Vermont Rental Subsidy Program, as established in the program's application and training materials.

Manual Maintenance

Significant changes are indicated by highlighting text in gray.

General Assistance Procedure

Remove

Insert

P-2695 (17-10)

P-2695 (23-16)

P-2695 Vermont Rental Subsidy Program

The Vermont Rental Subsidy Program (VRS) is a housing assistance program within the General Assistance program to provide short-term rental assistance to Vermont households whose monthly income would otherwise be insufficient to afford the cost of renting in their communities. VRS 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. VRS is not an entitlement program and may be discontinued when the appropriation has been fully spent.

The following General Assistance rules shall apply to all VRS applicants and recipients:

- Rule 2601 – Application;
- Rule 2603 – Definitions;
- Rule 2604 – Citizenship and Residence;
- Rule 2605 – Applicant’s Responsibility;
- Rule 2640 – Income; and
- Rule 2646 – Excluded Income.

A. Application

Every VRS application must be fully completed and signed by the applicant, Housing Support Worker (HSW), Housing Review Team (HRT) representative, or Reach Up Supervisor. Incomplete or unsigned applications shall be denied.

The Department will cross check information provided in the VRS application with information previously reported to the Department for other programs. If the information does not match, the Department shall request verification of inconsistent information via email from the HSW. The Department shall deny the application if the requested verification is not received within 30 days.

B. Initial Eligibility

To qualify for rental assistance through VRS, applicants must meet all of the following eligibility criteria:

1. Be currently homeless, as defined by the Agency of Human Services Housing Policy;
2. Have applied for all other available subsidized housing programs (e.g. family unification program, housing authority, etc.);
3. Cannot be receiving rental assistance through any other subsidized housing program;
4. For Reach Up or GA/EA recipients, must be in compliance with all applicable program requirements;

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5. Be eligible for Section 8 rental assistance pursuant to HUD regulations;
6. Monthly expenses must not exceed monthly income, according to income and expenses for the 30 days prior to the date of application; and
7. Net monthly income (income minus expenses) cannot be less than 30% of total monthly income.

C. Criteria for Prioritizing VRS Applications

The number of openings for the VRS program shall be determined according to the funds appropriated for the program for that fiscal year. If there are no openings in the program at the time the Department receives an application, the applicant shall be placed on the VRS waiting list. The applicant's position on the waiting list shall be determined according to the following point system:

Points shall be assigned only once within each category. The maximum number of points is 43. Applicants with the highest number of points shall receive priority for the next available VRS opening. If more than one applicant receives the same number of points, the applicant will be placed on the waiting list in the order of the time and date the application was received.

Category	Description	Points
Household Type	Reach Up/RA/PSE Recipient	20
	SSI/SSDI Recipient	15
	Below 125% of FPL	10
Household Size	1-2	1
	3-4	2
	5 or more	3
Current Housing Situation	GA Emergency housing	10
	Emergency Shelter	10
	Meets AHS definition of homeless	4
Source of Income	Employment	10
	Reach Up/RA/PSE and/or SSI/SSDI	5

Applicants shall remain on the waiting list until an opening becomes available for the applicant or until he HSW, Reach Up Supervisor or HRT requests that the applicant be removed from the list.

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Applicants are required to report any change in circumstances within 10 days during their time on the waiting list and points shall be adjusted accordingly. Applicants must continue to meet the initial eligibility criteria listed in P-2695(B) to remain on the waiting list.

D. Tentative Approval

1. Applicants who meet the eligibility criteria listed in P-2695(B) shall be tentatively approved for VRS if there is an opening available. The tentative approval notice shall include the portion of rent the applicant will be responsible for each month, rental unit size, the maximum allowable rent plus utilities, and the district in which the rental unit must be located.

- a. Client Portion Minimums

VRS clients are responsible for paying the greater of 30 percent of their gross monthly Household income or the portion minimum toward their rental costs. Funds from the General/Emergency Assistance program may not be used toward the greater of 30 percent of gross monthly income or the portion minimum. The portion minimum for rental units located in Chittenden County is \$232. The portion minimum for rental units located outside of Chittenden County is \$198. If the household has only Reach Up income their portion would be the minimum in their area.

- b. Rental Unit Size

Rental unit size is determined based on household size. The following chart shows the rental unit size by the number of 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:

- Persons of different generations and unrelated adults will be allocated a separate bedroom.
- Live-in aides will be allocated a separate bedroom.

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- 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.

c. Maximum Allowable Rent

The following table shows the maximum allowable rent per county/town. The Department utilizes the Vermont State Housing Voucher Payment Standards (VPS). When calculating the VPS maximum: the monthly rental cost plus any utilities that the household is responsible to pay must be under the VPS maximum.

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

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2. Applicants must locate a rental unit within 60 days from the date of tentative approval notice. The rental unit must meet the criteria for size and maximum allowable rent and must be located within the district indicated in the tentative approval notice. The Department shall deny the application if the applicant has not located a rental unit meeting these criteria within 60 days of the date of the tentative approval notice.

E. Final Approval

1. In order to obtain final approval for VRS rental assistance, an applicant must submit the following documentation to the Department within 10 days of notifying the Department that a rental unit has been located:
 - Housing inspection stating that the rental unit has passed inspection;
 - Executed lease agreement and completed VRS lease addendum; and
 - Shelter expense statement completed by landlord and signed by the tenant.
 - The Department may ask for a W-9 completed by the landlord if they are not known in the system.
 - Signed authorization to release information from Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA)

The Department shall deny the application if the above documentation is not accurately completed and received within 10 days of the Department receiving notification that a rental unit has been located.

2. The client'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:
 - Determine the prorated rent by multiplying the cost per day by the number of days being prorated.
 - Determine the percentage of total monthly rent the client's portion represents.
 - The client's prorated portion is equal to the percentage above multiplied by the prorated rent.

F. Ongoing Eligibility

1. VRS rental assistance shall continue for 12 months unless the client:
 - Receives another housing subsidy or voucher (e.g. Section 8, Family Unification Voucher);
 - Becomes ineligible for Section 8 rental assistance pursuant to HUD regulations;
 - Is evicted (excluding no cause or sold property evictions pursuant to 9 V.S.A. § 4467);

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- Is not working with their HSW;
- Is sanctioned under the Reach Up program for three or more months; or
- Has not paid their portion of the rent for three or more months.

2. VRS rental assistance may be extended in increments of up to three months. The client's HSW must submit a client review form for each extension requested. Client review's must be approved by the HRT, RU Supervisor or HSW and received by the Department no later than the first day of the last approved payment month. The Department will consider the following factors in determining whether an extension is appropriate:

- Client's housing and financial status (e.g. whether the client is a tenant in good standing, whether the client is in the process of securing a longer-term housing subsidy; whether the client has been working to increase income);
- Where the client will live and whether they will continue case management if an extension is not granted;
- Whether the client is included in the Vermont State Housing Authority's transitional preference group for VRS;
- Housing support worker's rationale for supporting or opposing the extension; and
- Likelihood that the client will achieve self-sustainability in the amount of time for which the extension is requested.

Granting or denying an extension is entirely within the discretion of the Department. During an extension, VRS rental assistance shall be terminated for any of the reasons listed in P-2695(F)(1).

G. Change of Circumstances

Applicants are required to report any change in circumstances within 10 days to the Department.

1. Income

When there is a change in household income, the client portion will be recalculated to reflect 30 percent of gross monthly household income or the portion minimum (see P-2695(D)(1)(a)). If the income change is reported before the adverse action approval deadline, the change will take effect for the first of the next month. If the income change is reported after the adverse action approval deadline and the client portion is decreasing, the change will take effect for the first of the next month. If the income change is reported after the adverse action approval deadline and the client portion is increasing, the change will take effect the second month following the month in which the change was reported .

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2. Household Composition

If the head of household leaves the household for more than one calendar month, VRS rental assistance will be terminated. At the Department's discretion, VRS 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 of the requirements with respect to rental unit size and maximum allowable rent. The documentation listed in P-2695(E)(1) must be submitted within 10 days of notifying the Department that a new rental unit has been located. If the client would like to relocate to another district, the HRT, HSW or Supervisor in the new district must approve. 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, VRS rental assistance may continue if there are extenuating circumstances.

H. Deputy Commissioner Review and Fair Hearing Requests:

1. 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 10 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.

2. 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, then any overpayment received by the individual pending the fair hearing will be subject to recoupment.