

Family Unification Program (FUP)

Appendix Outlining Intra-Departmental Coordination & Process for Identifying and Referring Eligible Participants

Staff Liaisons

The following staff are responsible for transmitting and accepting FUP referrals.

AHS/DCF:

- ⇒ Primary: Amanda Churchill, DCF FSD; Christine Dorer, DCF ESD; Lily Sojourner, DCF OEO
- ⇒ Backup: Kristin Lyons, DCF OEO

VSHA:

- ⇒ Primary: Sara Cressey and Mark Weber, VT State Housing Authority
- ⇒ Backup: Elizabeth Whitmore VT State Housing Authority

Program Coordination

The following staff meet quarterly to ensure coordination between referring programs, service providers and rental assistance providers.

- ⇒ DCF Economic Services Division (ESD): Christine Dorer, Monika Madaras
- ⇒ DCF Family Services Division (FSD): Lily Sojourner, Sarah Phillips
- ⇒ DCF Family Services Division (FSD): Amanda Churchill, Tyler Allen
- ⇒ VT State Housing Authority (VSHA):

Kathleen Berk

Kelli Robinson

Bethany Lund

Elizabeth Whitmore

Mark Weber

Sara Cressey

Overview of Referral & Application Process

Referring Agency - Youth Development Program (YDP), Family Services Division (FSD), Family Supportive Housing (FSH), Reach Up or through Coordinated Entry.

1. Identify families & youth who may be eligible for & interested in the program.
2. Do an initial screen for eligibility.

TO BE ELIGIBLE:

- ✓ The family/youth must be involved with YDP, FSD, FSH or Reach Up.
- ✓ The applicant may be a:

Family

If the lack of adequate housing is a factor in their child being:

- a. Placed in out-of-home care *OR*
- b. Able to return home from out-of-home care

Youth

If they:

- a. Left foster care at age 16 or older (or will leave within 90 days)
- b. Are currently between the ages of 18 and 24 *AND*
- c. Are homeless/at risk of becoming homeless (see *definition on pages 7 & 8*)

3. Make sure required case management is in place: at least 12 months for families and 36 months for youth. See *pages 6 & 7 for more information about case management.*
4. Complete the *Program Referral Form*.
 - ⇒ Get the form online at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/oeo/partners/FUP>
 - ⇒ Have the appropriate supervisor/district director/district manager sign it to confirm categorical eligibility.
5. Complete the *Inadequate Housing Form*.
 - ⇒ Get the form online at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/oeo/partners/FUP> .
 - ⇒ Sign the form to certify that the family/youth is currently living in inadequate housing.
6. Work with the family to complete the *VSHA Pre-Application*.

- ⇒ Get the form online at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/oeo/partners/FUP> .
 - ⇒ The family signs the form to confirm accuracy.
7. Typed signatures will NOT be accepted. Acceptable forms include handwritten signatures or electronic signatures that include a time/date stamp (PDF stamp, DocuSign, etc.).
 8. Email the completed forms to AHS.DCFFUVReferrals@vermont.gov.

DCF Central Office staff:

1. Email the referring agency and signing authority confirming receipt of the referral. *The client's name should be included in the body of the email and not the subject line.*
2. Place the family/youth on the *Centralized Referral List*.
3. Rank the priority families and youth on the list.

Prioritize eligible youth/families in the following order:

1. Involved with the Family Services Division & urgency factor score
2. Urgency factor score
3. Date of referral

Eligible households get one point for each of the following urgency factors:

- ✓ Meets the AHS/HUD definition of homeless (*see definition on pages 7 & 8*)
- ✓ Has had multiple episodes of homelessness OR are currently experiencing a period of homelessness that has lasted for one year or more
- ✓ Has at least one child under the age of six

4. When VSHA notifies DCF that additional FUP vouchers are available:
 - i. Select the appropriate number of names from the list – according to the priority.
 - ii. Review the names to make sure they're still eligible and a priority. Depending on the size of the referral list and length of time households have been on the list, this may include checking with the YDP, FSD and Reach Up program staff.
5. Ask the case manager to review forms for accuracy and help the youth/family being referred to complete the VSHA *Release of Information and HUD Supplemental Contact Info*.
 - i. Get the forms online at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/oeo/partners/FUP> .

- ii. Email the completed forms to AHS.DCFFUVReferrals@vermont.gov.
 - iii. Include updated versions of the *Referral Form*, *VSHA Pre-Application*, or *Inadequate Housing Form* if there have been changes or if it's more than 60 days old.
6. Send the names of family/youth being referred along with all their application materials to VSHA.

VSHA Staff:

1. Review the names and application materials received from DCF and request a full application.
2. Determine whether the youth/families meet additional eligibility requirements imposed by HUD – consistent with administration of the federal housing choice voucher program (HCV).
3. Notify youth/families, referring agencies/organizations, case managers and DCF Central Office whether they are eligible.
4. If eligible, issue federal *Section 8 Housing Choice* vouchers to them.
 - ✓ There is no time limit on vouchers issued to families.
 - ✓ There is a 36-month limit on vouchers issued to youth.
5. Conduct all other processes relating to voucher administration.

If the process outlined above is modified, eligible applicants already on the *Centralized Referral List* will keep their priority position on any new waiting list.

Appeal of Eligibility Determination

An applicant who is denied participation in the program based on HUD or VSHA guidelines will be notified, in writing, of their right to appeal the decision.

They may submit a written request for an informal appeal and supporting documentation (e.g., self-statement and letters of recommendation) to:

Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA)
One Prospect Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05602
Fax: (802) 828-3248

VSHA could decide to waive one or more eligibility restrictions and issue a voucher to the youth/family based on:

- The nature of the information presented,
- Mitigating factors, and
- Plans developed to address past issues.

DEFINITIONS

Case Management for Families:

Case management will be provided for a minimum of 12 months, with face-to-face meetings at least once a month.

Case management may be provided by DCF staff or community agencies. In many cases, programs will be able to provide services more frequently and for a longer period. After the first year in the program, the frequency of in-person meetings may be adjusted based on how the families are proceeding with individual plans. All parties understand that during times of crisis or transition, they may require additional or more frequent supports.

While the model, amount and duration of services will vary by program and the needs of the family, services will at least include:

1. Establishing (through consultation with the client, DCF and other engaged providers) a lead case manager or coordinator and communication criteria to ensure supports are integrated.
2. Helping them write a housing plan and set personal goals.
3. Helping them identify their strengths, opportunities and any underlying issues that could undermine housing stability.
4. Helping them get and keep stable housing that they can afford. *VSHA's local field rep will provide assistance with the housing search.*
5. Providing them with information about other appropriate services and encouraging them to take appropriate action to address any barriers.
6. Identifying the appropriate level of support for each family.
7. Developing effective working relationships and agreements with landlords. This includes providing the landlord with contact information of people to contact if problems come up
8. Providing follow-up case management after they've moved into permanent housing.
9. Communicating with VSHA when a family ceases to be eligible for the Family Unification Program — or no longer requires the same level of service — so VSHA can graduate them from the program. In some cases, this may involve transitioning them to other federal subsidy programs that are less service intensive.

Case Management for Youth:

Case management will be provided for a minimum of 36 months, with face-to-face meetings at least once a month.

Once a youth has brought a unit under contract with their transitional Family Unification voucher, and if the VSHA Section 8 waiting list is open, an application may be submitted under the Transitional Housing Preference which is open to VSHA's / HUD's Family Unification program for Youth in Transition.

After the first year on the program, the frequency of in-person meetings with clients may be adjusted based on how they're proceeding with individual plans. All parties understand that during times of crisis or transition, youth may require additional or more frequent supports. Youth who are thriving and in good standing with their landlord will not require the same level of services. At the first-year assessment, youth should be made aware of VSHA's Family Self Sufficiency program.

Case planning will be provided to youth based on the participant's individual strengths, needs, goals, and resources, to include:

- Housing education and home management
- Budget and financial management
- Career preparation
- Access to higher education
- Access to health care and risk prevention
- Self-sufficiency with transportation
- Establishing and maintaining connections with caring adults and peers

In addition to the services described above, eligible youth may be supported by other agencies such as Designated Agencies, Reach Up, Parent Child Centers, etc.

Coordinated Entry (CE)

A process to streamline access to homeless and housing assistance for households experiencing a housing crisis. CE is implemented under the oversight of the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness and the Chittenden Homeless Alliance. It establishes clear, uniform processes to identify and refer households needing housing help, assess housing needs, and match households to housing assistance (e.g., supports, units and subsidies) to meet their needs. In CE, local partners in the Continuum of Care (CoC) maintain a community-wide master list of households experiencing homelessness. The CE assessment and master list provide a way to identify households who may be eligible for FUP. When a household is identified through Coordinated Entry, the CE partners identify a case management sponsor, the local district office verifies eligibility and a referral form is sent to the DCF central office. To make a CE referral please see: <http://helpingtohousevt.org/whatwedo/coordinatedentry/overview/>

AHS/HUD Definition of Homelessness

CATEGORY 1	Literally Homeless	<p>Individual/family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;2. Is living in supervised publicly or privately-operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals); OR3. Is exiting an institution where (s)he resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.
CATEGORY 2	At imminent risk of homelessness	<p>Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance,2. No subsequent residence has been identified, AND3. The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks (e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks) needed to obtain other permanent housing.

<p style="text-align: center;">CATEGORY 3</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Homeless under other federal statutes</p>	<p>Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are defined as homeless under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (42 U.S.C. 5732a, section 387), the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9832, section 637), the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e-2, section 41403), the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b(h), section 330(h)), the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2012, section 3), the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786(b), section 17(b)) or McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a, section 725); • Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing at any time during the 60 days immediately preceding the date of application for homeless assistance; • Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the preceding 60-days; AND • Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse (including neglect), the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or two or more barriers to employment, which include the lack of a high school degree or General Education Development (GED), illiteracy, low English proficiency, a history of incarceration or detention for criminal activity, and a history of unstable employment.
<p style="text-align: center;">CATEGORY 4</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Fleeing/ attempting to flee domestic violence</p>	<p>Any individual or family who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member, including a child, that has either taken place within the individual's or family's primary nighttime residence or has made the individual or family afraid to return to their primary nighttime residence; • Has no other residence; AND • Lacks the resources or support networks (e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks) to obtain other permanent housing.

