

Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP)

Annual Report - State Fiscal Year 2024

July 2023 – June 2024

The Vermont Department for Children and Families, Office of Economic Opportunity administers Vermont’s Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP). The program provides a blend of state and federal¹ funding to support operations, staffing, financial assistance, and medium-term rental assistance at 39 non-profit emergency shelter, transitional housing, housing navigation, rapid re-housing and homelessness prevention organizations serving all regions of the state.

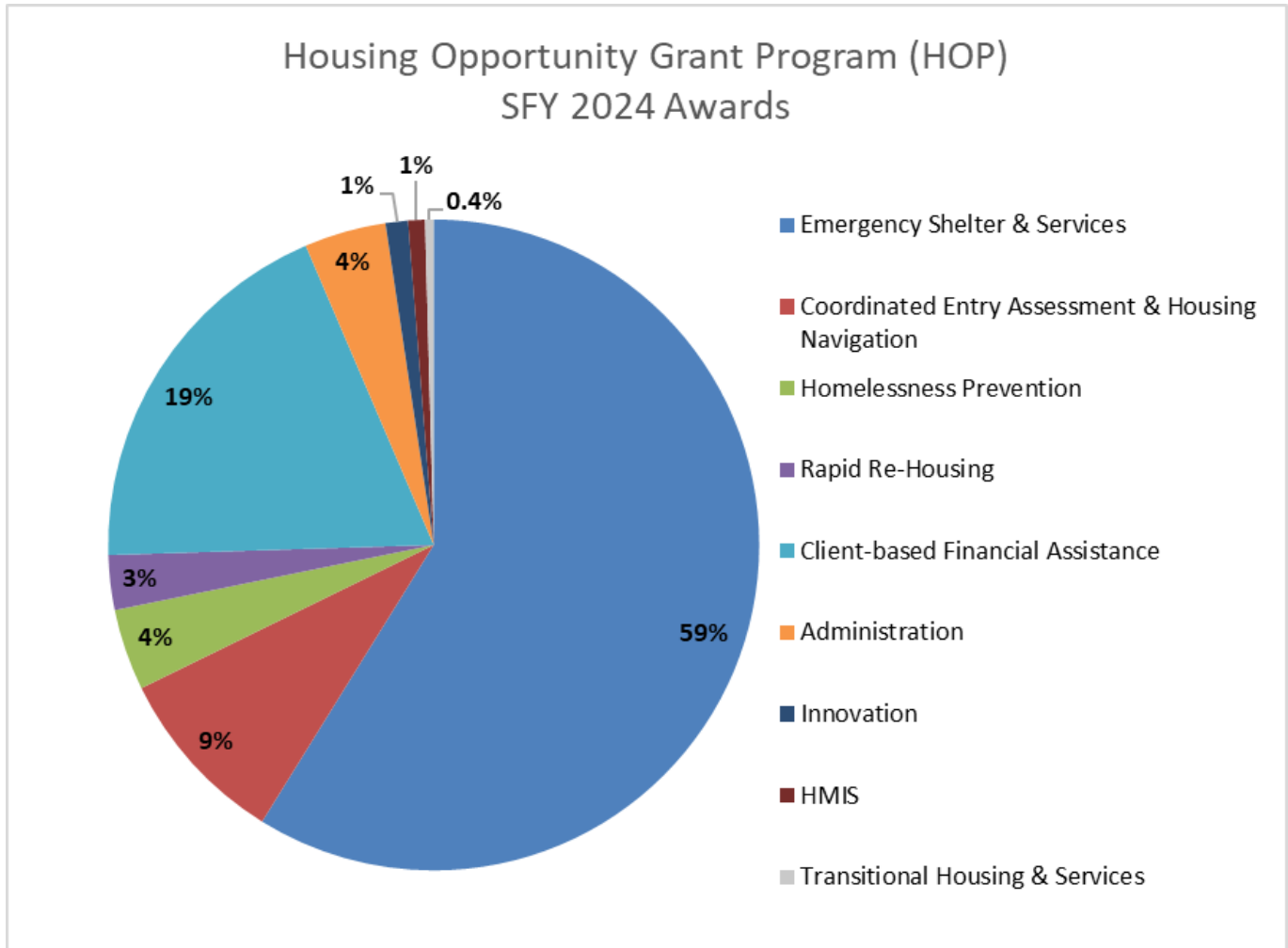
During State Fiscal Year 2024, the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) also continued to administer the Housing Stability Services program, which provides support to households as part of the statewide Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP).

The State Office of Economic Opportunity works in close partnership with both HUD-recognized Homeless Continua of Care, the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance and the Vermont Balance of State, to consult on performance measurement, data management, and developing coordinated entry within both systems of care. This report details the services and shelter provided by publicly funded, privately operated non-profit partners. It provides insight into changes in the population experiencing homelessness in Vermont, as it details the level of service and results achieved by this system of care. It is best understood in tandem with reports from the statewide homeless Point-in-Time Count and the Economic Services Division on the General Assistance Emergency Housing program.

¹ US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Emergency Solutions Grant and Continuum of Care Grant and Global Commitment Investment

Funding & Program Summary

In SFY2024, just under \$30 million in state and federal funding was awarded under the Housing Opportunity Grant Program.



The Housing Opportunity Grant Program supports basic operations and essential services at 24 organizations operating overnight emergency shelters, including eight shelters for persons fleeing domestic/sexual violence and seven motel overflow pools operated by these agencies. Shelters range in size from a few rooms for families to 36 beds for single adults. Additionally, six organizations provided emergency shelter in 31 scattered site apartments, ranging in size from one to three bedrooms.

Approximately \$4.3 million of HOP funds supported direct services staff at emergency shelters, such as case managers or housing specialists. Approximately \$13.2 million supported emergency shelter operations, such as utilities, rent, building insurance, non-case management staff, shelter supplies, or routine maintenance. \$33,000 supported client-based financial assistance to divert or quickly exit households from emergency shelter.

The Housing Opportunity Grant Program also supports homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing strategies. Both strategies provide housing relocation and stabilization support such as housing search and placement; landlord-tenant mediation; housing case management; follow-up or supportive services to help maintain housing; money management; financial assistance such as security deposits, utility payments and deposits, moving costs, rental arrearages; and up to 24 months of rental assistance. Approximately \$1.8 million of HOP funds supported direct service staff in these projects, such as housing navigators, while just under \$5.9 million supported client-based rental and financial assistance.

Over \$2.6 million supported Coordinated Entry to streamline access to homeless assistance resources (intake and assessment services) and to help re-house homeless individuals and families in permanent housing as quickly as possible (housing navigation services). Approximately \$704,000 supported the implementation of HMIS, Transitional Housing programs, and innovative projects such as landlord liaisons. Remaining funds were awarded to HOP grantees to support general administration.

Vermonters experiencing homelessness or housing instability face significant challenges. These include the lack of available rentals, the high cost of rent, and very low incomes. These factors impact outcomes across the Housing Opportunity Grant Program as the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to stress the homelessness response system.

Program changes initially implemented in State Fiscal Year 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic continued at some level in State Fiscal Year 2024. Following public health recommendations, shelters limited new intakes during active outbreaks on site. Motel-based services and outreach remained significant activities during the year. Many seasonal shelters, typically providing congregate shelter during cold weather months and overnight only, did not operate again this year. Additional activities as part of the COVID response and recovery efforts included:

- A continued partnership with the Vermont Department of Health to provide guidance, training and technical assistance, including site-specific support on infection prevention and control;
- Maintaining non-congregate sheltering options through the General Assistance (GA) Emergency Housing Program; and
- Building capacity within local communities to improve homeless health care through a grant administered by the Vermont Department of Health.

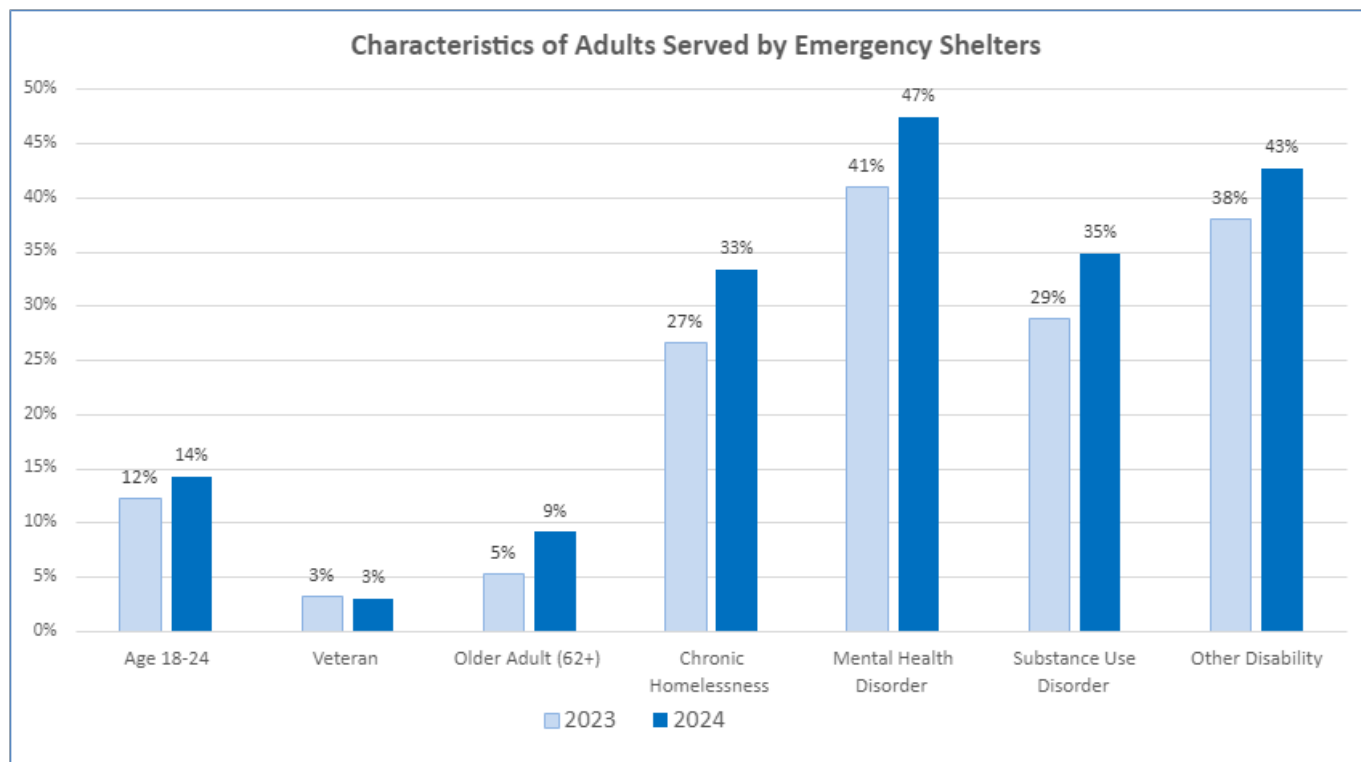
Emergency Shelter Persons Served, Demographics, Bednights & Length of Stay

Between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024, Vermont’s publicly funded emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, and youth shelters, reported the following:

- **3,200** persons (63% individuals and 37% in families with children) sheltered for a total of **186,012** bednights.²
- **2,509** were adults and **691** were children under the age of 18.
- The average length of stay was **58** days (a decrease from the 64 days in SFY2023).
- Approximately 61% of sheltered children (421) and 55% of persons in families (652) spent their stay through a domestic/sexual violence shelter.³

Only two seasonal shelters operated in SFY2024, providing a total of 5,942 bednights.⁴ While this is an increase from the past several years, it is still well below pre-COVID levels: in SFY2019 27,351 bednights were provided at seasonal shelters. Since SFY2019, nine seasonal shelter projects have ended; some, but not all, have been replaced with other year-round options run by the same agencies. Although not the purview of this report, the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program continued to serve an increased number of households during the same period as part of the State’s pandemic response.

The chart below reflects a sampling of demographics for all adults (2,518) served by emergency shelters.

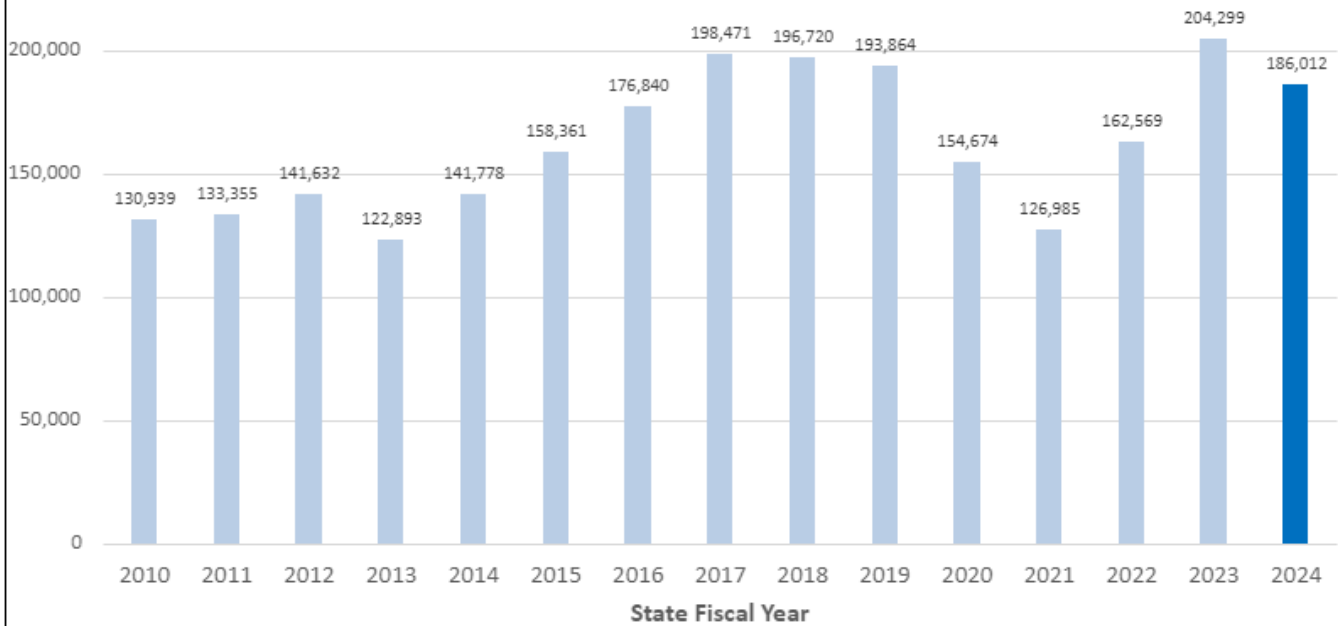


² One bednight = One person sheltered for one night. Total bednights = Number of persons x the number of nights sheltered.

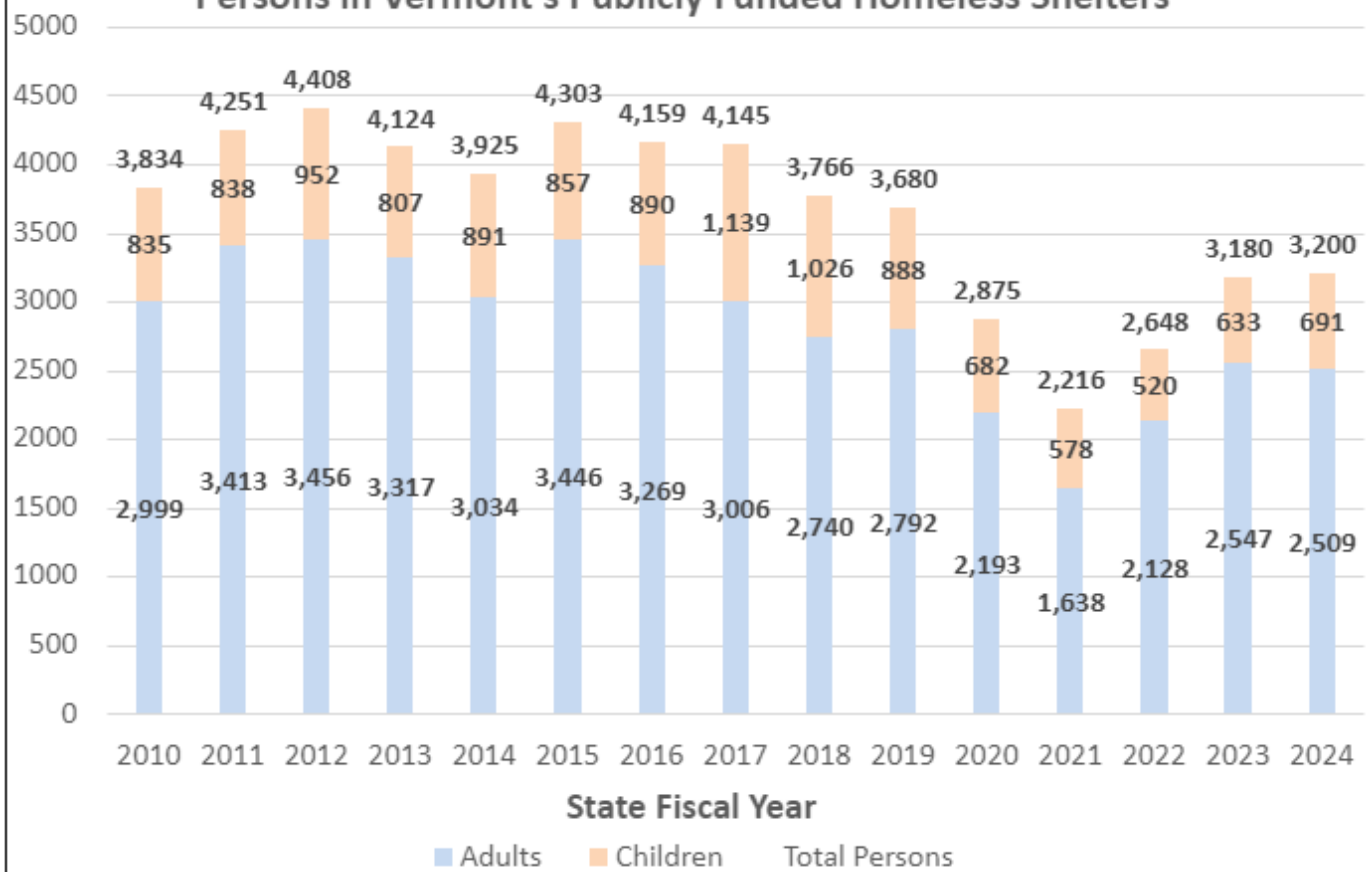
³ In most AHS districts, DCF partners with domestic violence shelters to directly meet emergency housing needs for all victims fleeing domestic/sexual violence (including through motel vouchers) rather than referrals to the General Assistance Emergency Housing Program. These bednights are included in the total.

⁴ Does not include Extreme Cold Weather Shelters.

Shelter Bednights: Vermont's Publicly Funded Homeless Shelters

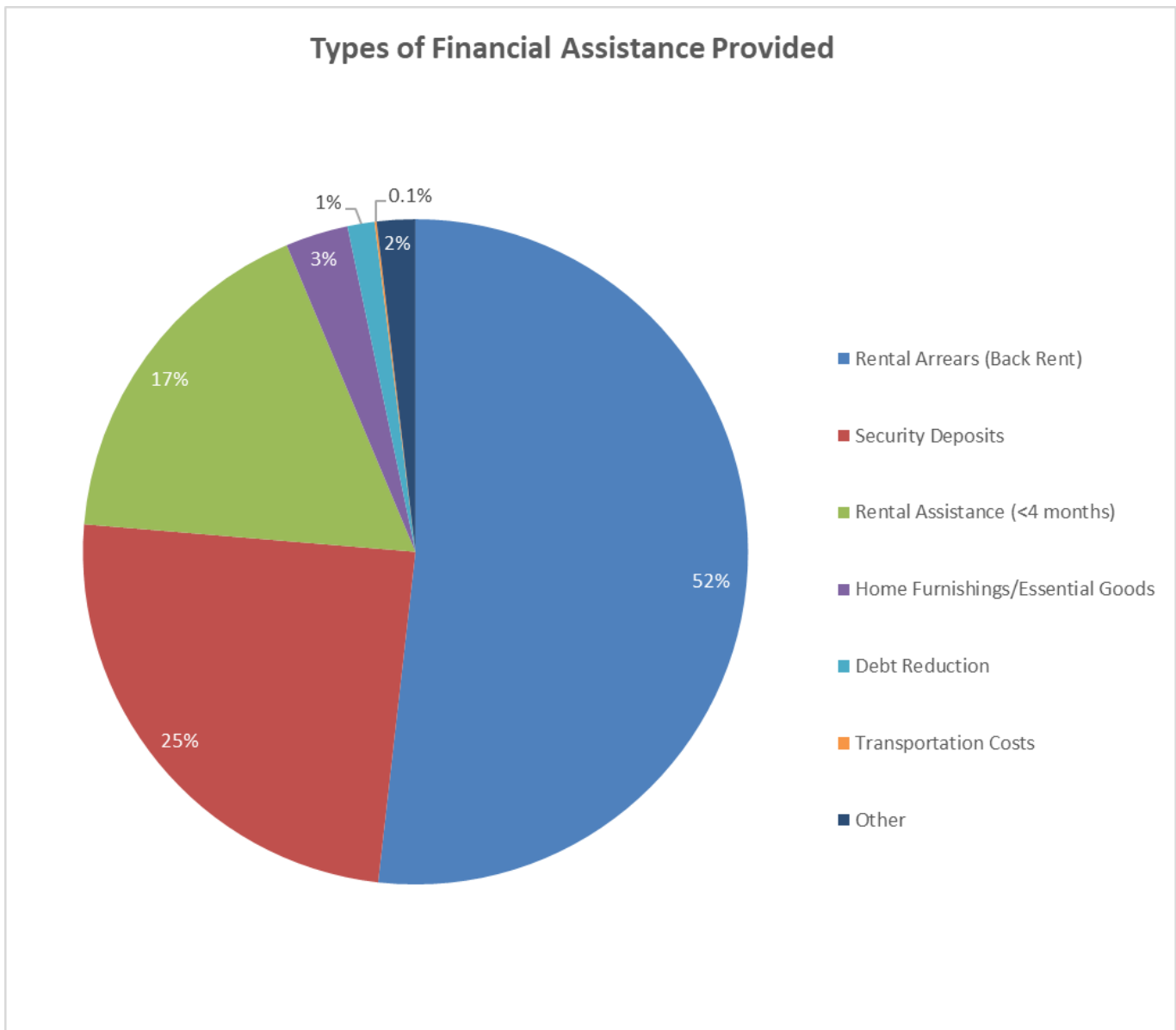


Persons in Vermont's Publicly Funded Homeless Shelters



Flexible Financial Assistance Households Assisted, Types of Assistance

Between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024, over \$4.7 million in flexible financial assistance was provided to 2,246 households. 71% of households assisted were at risk of homelessness, while 29% were experiencing homelessness. Over the past two years, many pandemic-era programs aimed at supporting low-income households ended, such as the VT Emergency Rental Assistance Program (VERAP), Reach Up Emergency Rental Assistance (RUERA), the expanded child tax credit and additional SNAP benefits (3SquaresVT). The overall impact on households has been a decreased ability to maintain their rental obligations while covering other household costs (e.g., food, clothing).



99.9% of households secured or maintained safe housing after receiving financial assistance. Of those households with safe housing, the majority were living in rental housing, either with a subsidy/voucher (57%) or without (41%). Other safe exit destinations included owned homes (2%), Permanent Supportive Housing (<1%), Residential or Halfway House (<1%), and staying or living with family or friends (<1%).

Housing Opportunity Grant Program Performance

Grantees report on measures tied to the category of funding received: Shelter Operations, Case Management, Homelessness Prevention, Rapid Re-Housing, and Financial Assistance. Performance targets and 2024 performance are included below. By reporting the “% of Grantees Meeting Target”, the Office of Economic Opportunity better understands how to provide training and technical assistance.

Performance Measures by Activity	Target	State FY 2024 Performance		% of Grantees Meeting Target
EMERGENCY SHELTER OPERATIONS				
Average # of nights that shelter was open, staffed, insured, clear of safety violations and available to shelter the homeless (excludes warming shelters and emergency apartments)	365	363		89%
Shelter households (individuals or families) will have an initial meeting with a case manager (or equivalent) within 3 days of entering the program	90%	Adult	80%	52%
		Youth	95%	80%
Households who exit emergency shelter, exit to stable permanent or transitional housing (excludes motel pool stays)	baseline	21%		n/a
YOUTH SHELTER & SERVICES				
Youth exiting the program will have “safe exits” as defined by one of the following: college, friends, home with family, independent living, job corps, military, relative’s home, or residential treatment/rehab	70%	59%		40%
ESSENTIAL SERVICES CASE MANAGEMENT⁵				
Homeless households referred for case management will meet with a case manager within 3 days of the referral	90%	80%		52%
Within 90 days of referral, households receiving case management will have at least 1 adult who is employed, OR enrolled in an educational or training program, OR has qualified for income benefits such as TANF, SSI or GA	70%	35%		17%
Households receiving case management will be stabilized in transitional or permanent housing	70%	20%		0%
Households stabilized or re-housed will continue to be in stable housing at least 90 days following assistance ⁶	70%	44%		36%
HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION				
Households at-risk of homelessness will have their housing stabilized or be safely re-housed	70%	86%		70%
Households stabilized or re-housed will continue to be in stable housing at least 90 days following assistance ⁷	70%	56%		56%
RAPID RE-HOUSING				
Homeless households will be safely re-housed	70%	72%		57%
Households re-housed will continue to be in stable housing at least 90 days following assistance ⁸	70%	41%		57%
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE				
Households will secure or maintain safe housing	baseline	99.9%		n/a

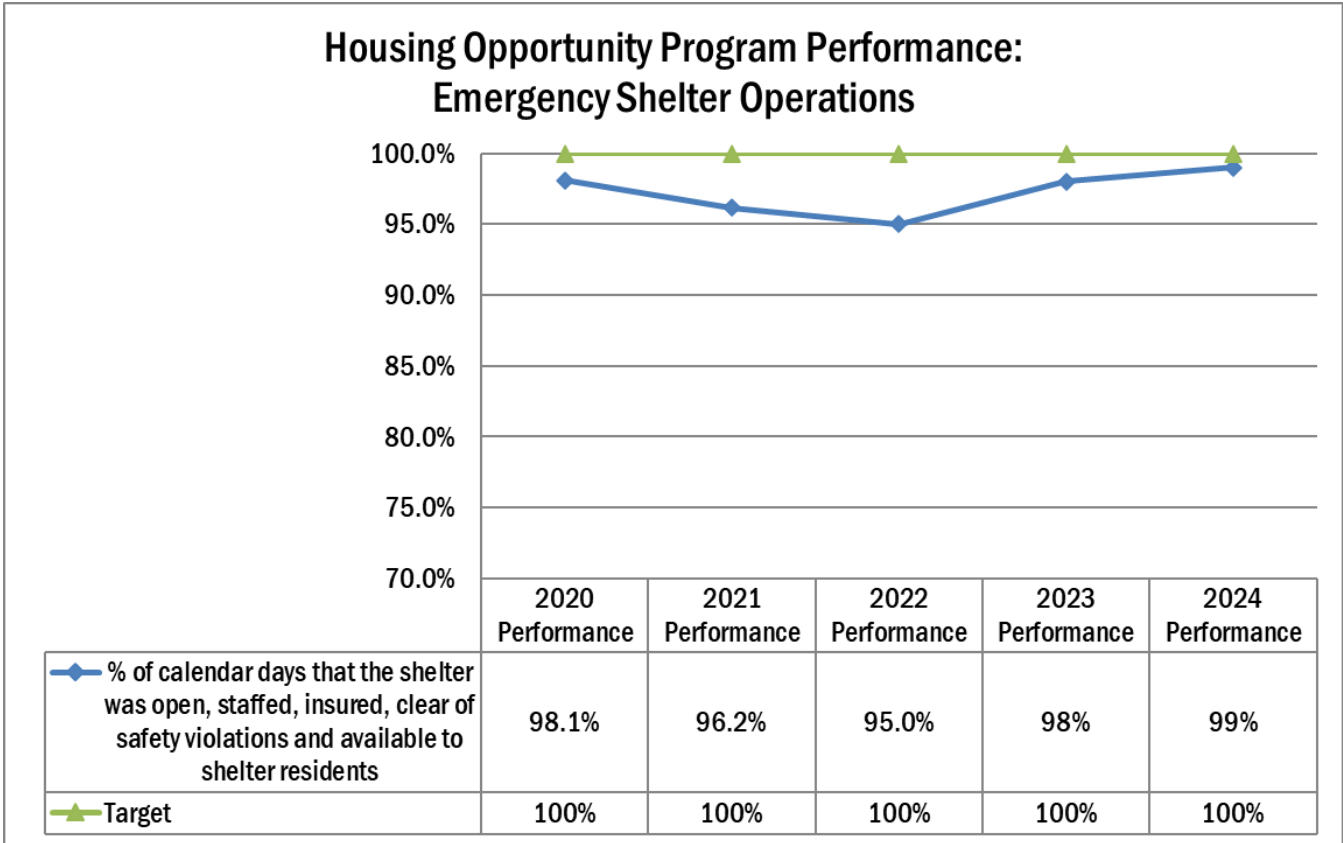
⁵ Only organizations that receive HOP funding for essential services case management report on these performance measures.

⁶ Victim service providers have been excluded from this measurement as they are not required to conduct follow up with households.

⁷ See footnote 6

⁸ See footnote 6

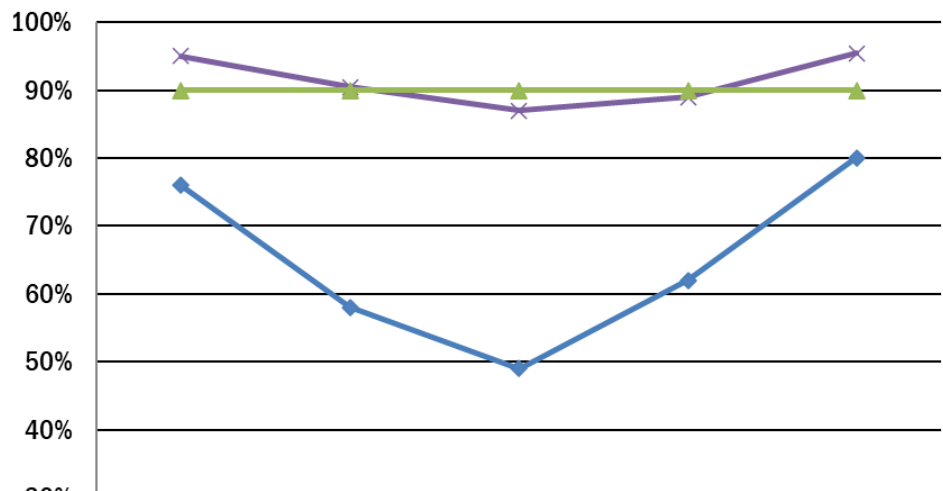
During SFY2024, the average percent of calendar days that shelters were open, staffed, insured, clear of safety violations and available to residents was 99%, with 89% of shelters staying open all 365 days during the year. Throughout the year there were some shelters that were closed due to either planned or unplanned renovation projects.



Some HOP-funded shelter projects operate with a scattered-site apartment model, with the agency master-leasing the unit to provide shelter to households. Data on the number of calendar days these types of shelters were open and available is not included above, as the model is unique and faces a different set of circumstances that can impact their availability. Some common examples include needing to find available apartments with willing landlords and maintenance often being the responsibility of the landlord (rather than the organization). Given that apartments are often offering more space to households, the time it takes to turn a unit over (clean, repair, refill supplies, etc.) for the next household increases when compared to other shelter models. In SFY24 the majority of scattered site apartments funded through HOP were open and available at least 10 months out of the year.

The Housing Opportunity Grant Program aims to ensure all shelter guests can meet with a case manager or advocate quickly after entry into a program (i.e., within 3 days). Quickly connecting to case management helps to meet the basic needs of all guests and connect guests to a permanent housing pathway. Some emergency shelters provide services onsite, while other programs refer guests to another service provider for case management support. On average, non-youth shelter grantees (52%) and youth shelter grantees (80%) are meeting the target for this measure. Improvement plans and technical assistance for specific agencies struggling with this measure began in SFY2022 and the impact of that work is reflected in the improved performance as shown below.

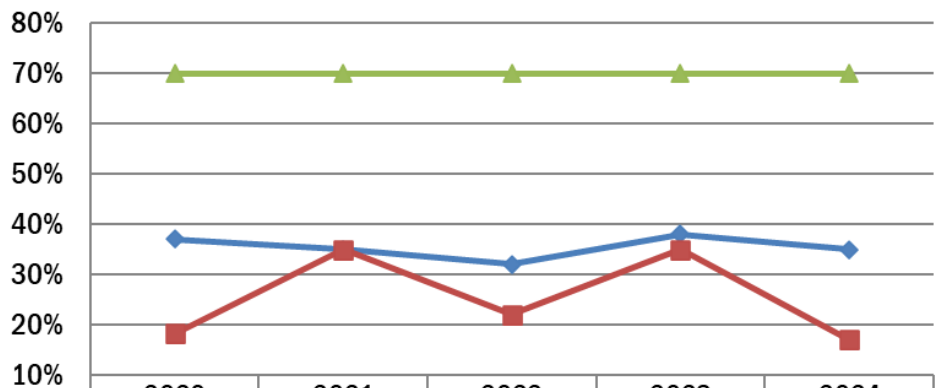
Housing Opportunity Program Performance: Shelter Operations, Service Referral



	2020 Performance	2021 Performance	2022 Performance	2023 Performance	2024 Performance
◆ Emergency Shelter: % of new HH who met with a case manager or advocate within 3 days of entrance	76%	58%	49%	62%	80%
✕ Youth Shelter: % of youth who met with a case manager within 3 days of entrance	95%	90%	87%	89%	95%
▲ Target	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%

Essential Services case management refers to comprehensive case management services provided to households in emergency shelters or the General Assistance Emergency Housing program. Essential Services case management supports households with housing goals, but also focuses more broadly on helping households access resources to support basic needs and increase income. SFY2024 saw performance on this measure slip again after a promising increase last fiscal year. OEO will evaluate the data to determine if there are areas of training and technical assistance that can be provided or if our performance measures need to be adjusted to reflect changes within our homeless response system.

Housing Opportunity Program Performance: Essential Services Case Management for Homeless Households, Income

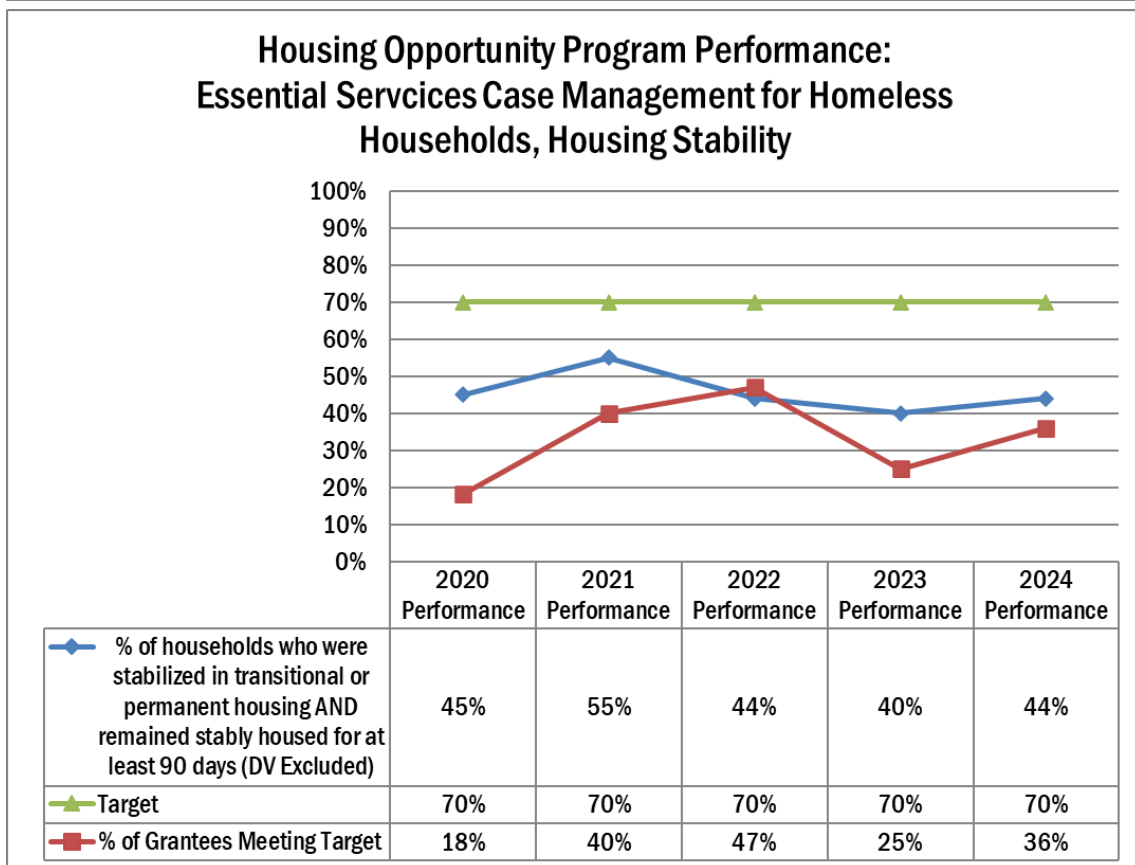
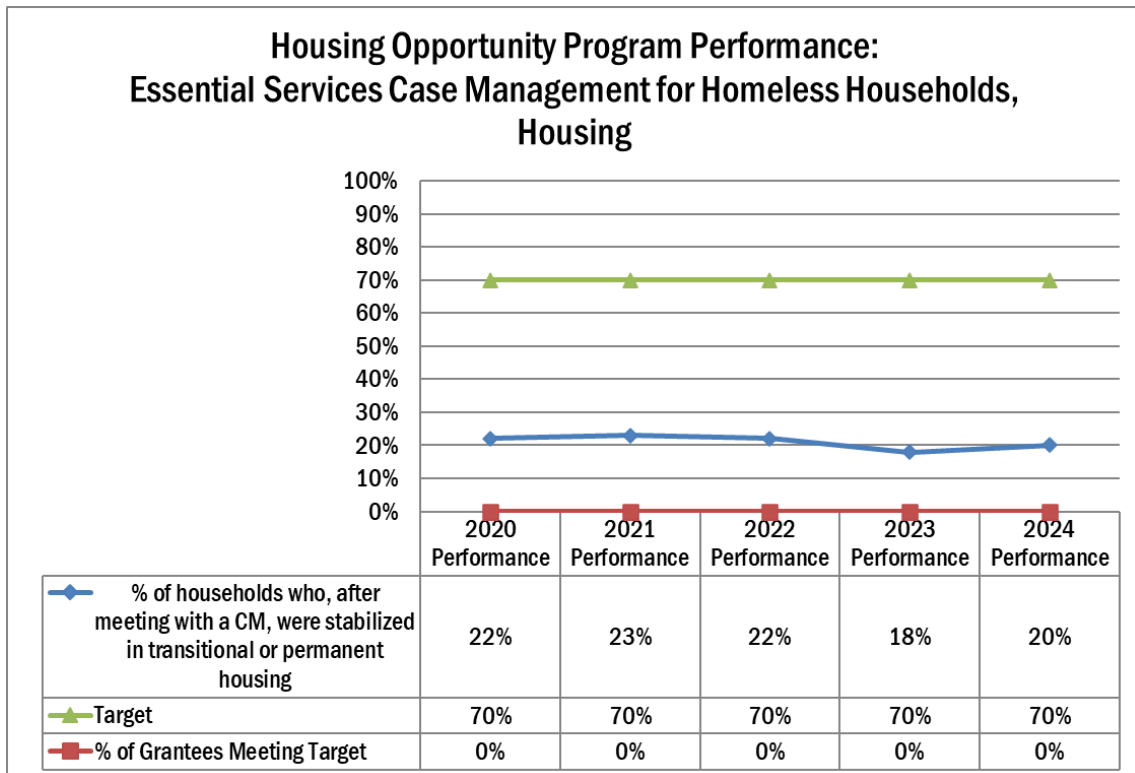


	2020 Performance	2021 Performance	2022 Performance	2023 Performance	2024 Performance
◆ % of HH who - within 90 days of case management - have at least 1 adult who has found employment OR enrolled in education or training OR qualified for income benefits (e.g, TANF, SSI, GA)	37%	35%	32%	38%	35%
▲ Target	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%
■ % of Grantees Meeting Target	18%	35%	22%	35%	17%

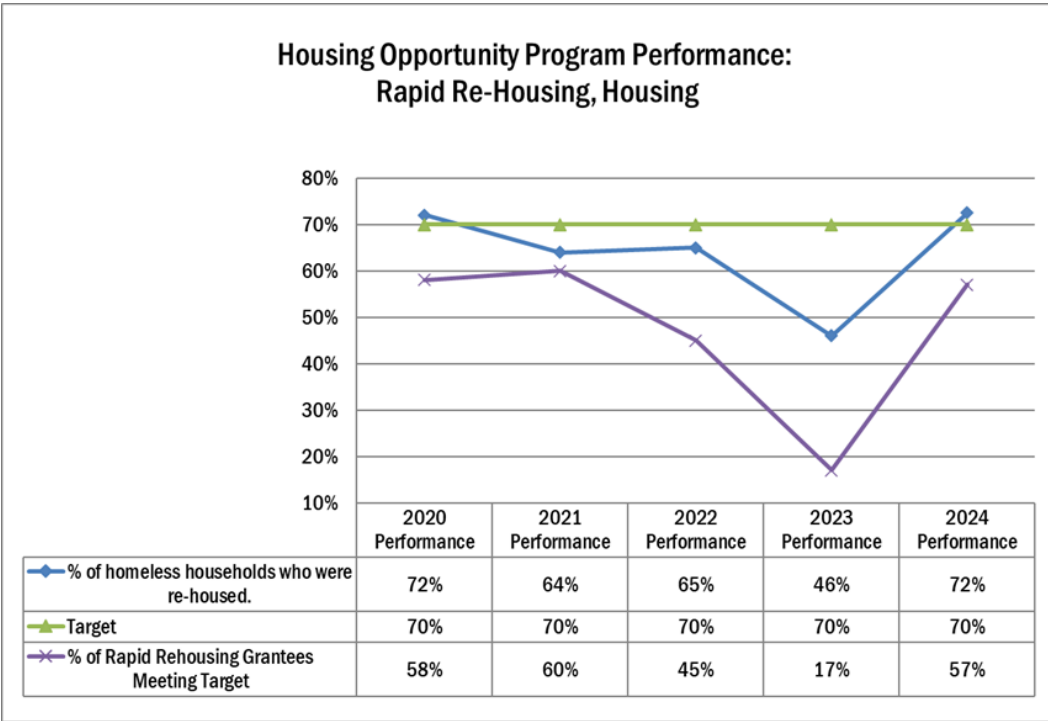
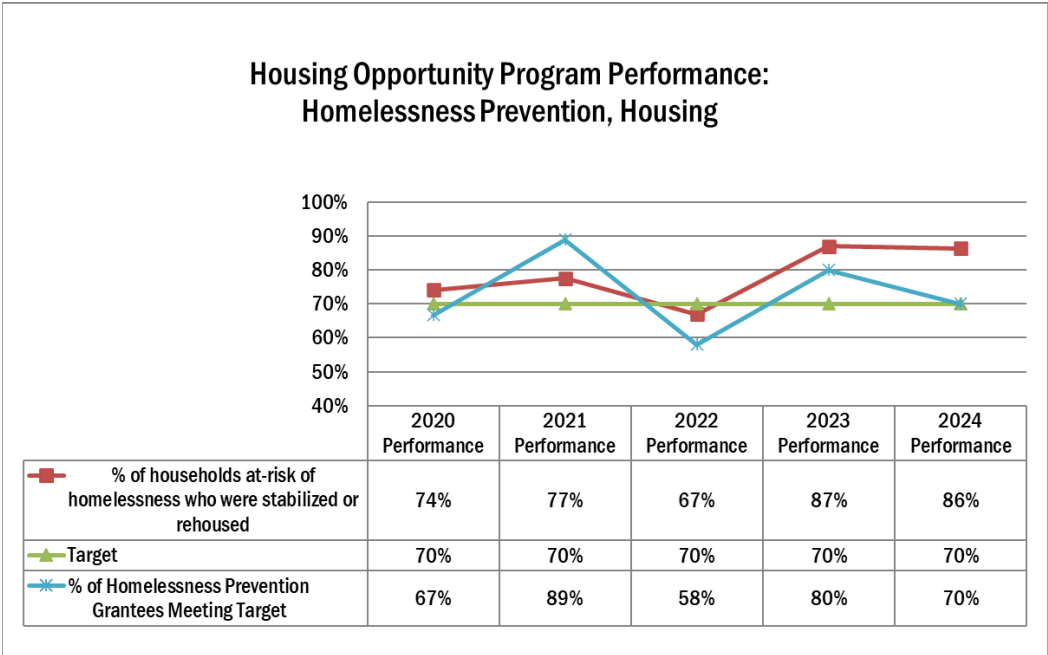
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⁹ This measure and data were reviewed in 2020 and the calculation changed. Only the years using the updated calculation (2020-2024) have been included.

In SFY2024, the number of households moving into stable housing after receiving essential services case management increased slightly, but still remains low. Of those supported into housing, 44% of households continued to be stably housed for at least 90 days. It is clear that stable housing outcomes continue to be impacted by a lack of housing stock or other sustainable housing options.

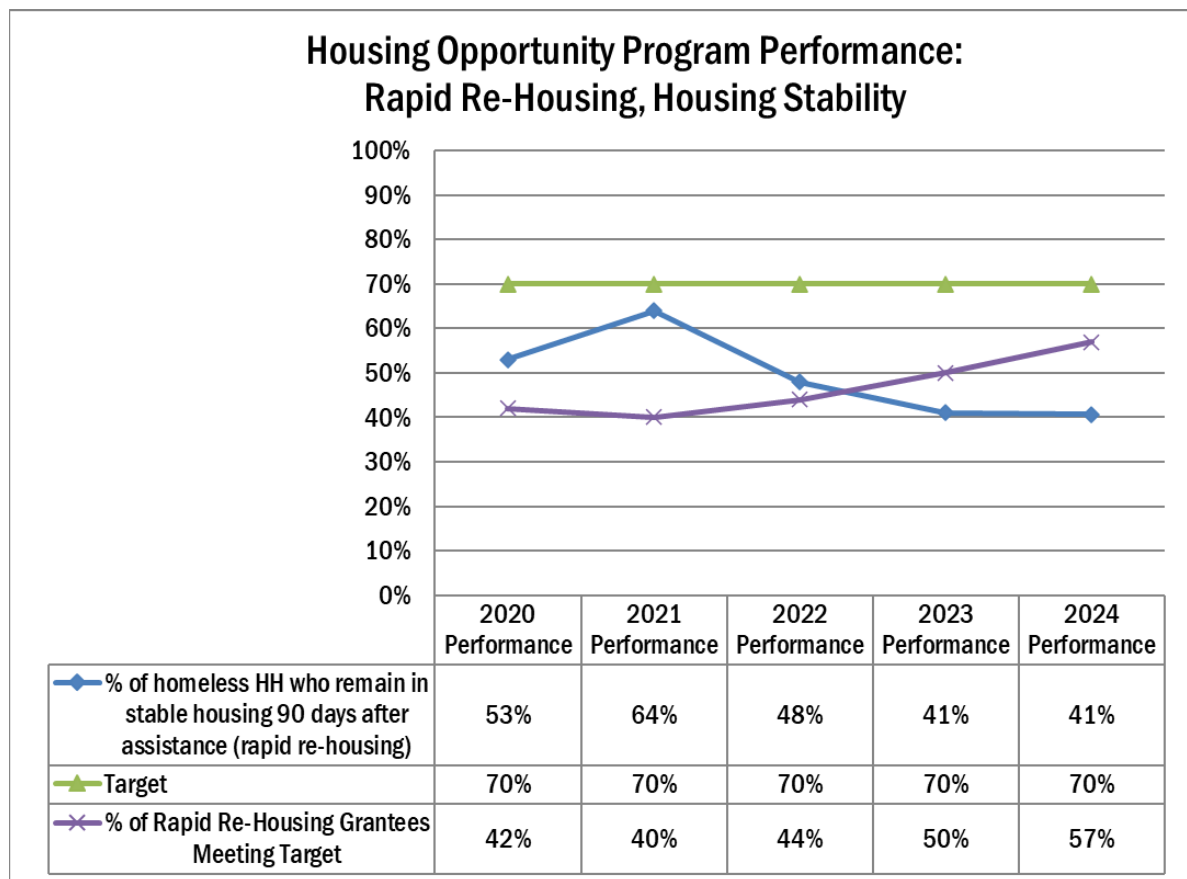
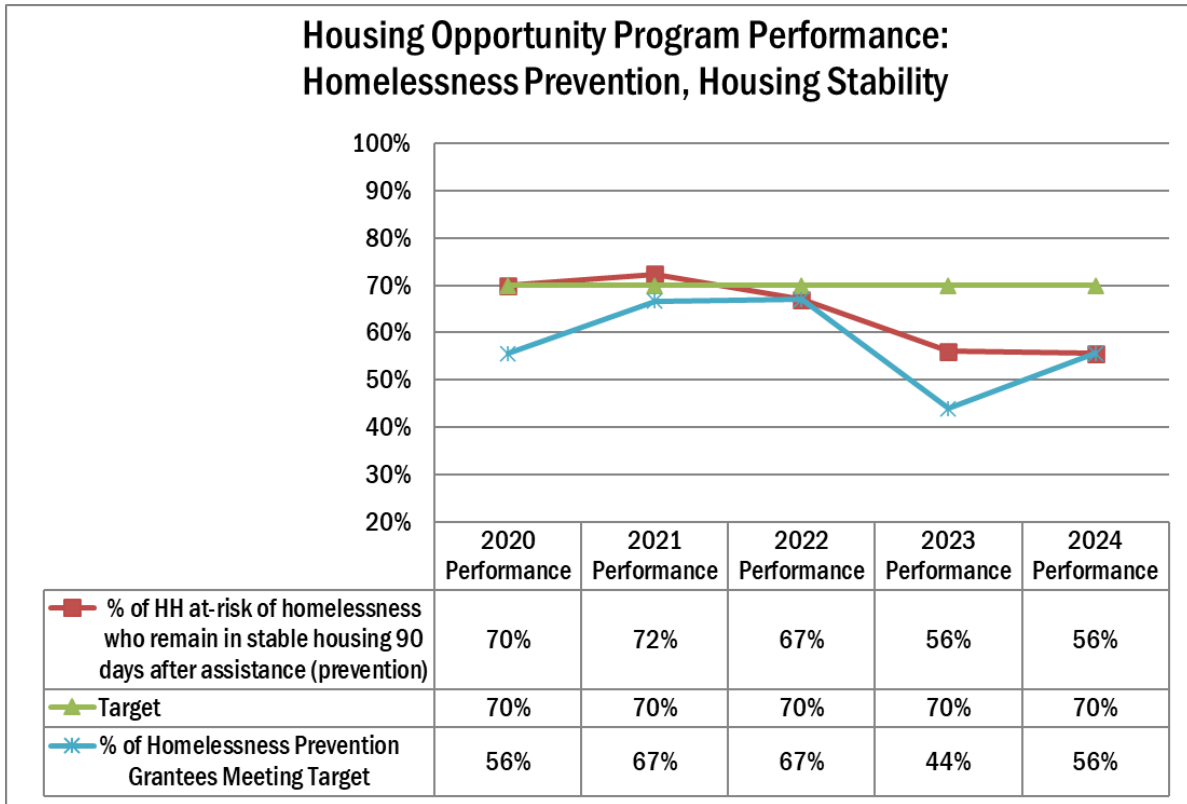


In SFY2024 Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing programs provided housing stability for 1,281 households, a significant increase from 985 households in SFY2023. The vast majority of these households were served in Homelessness Prevention, as the overall number of households served through Rapid Re-Housing programs continues to decrease (113 in SFY2024 vs. 899 in SFY2020). This decrease is partially a result of the restructuring of the Rapid Re-Housing program in HOP beginning in SFY2023, as well as the creation of a statewide Rapid Re-Housing project specifically for families, the HOME Family Voucher Program, in SFY2023¹⁰. While the percentage of households reported as achieving stability or being rehoused through Homelessness Prevention programs remained steady, HOP grantees reported a significant increase in those re-housed through Rapid Re-Housing in SFY2024.



¹⁰ Data from the HOME Family Voucher Program is not included in this report. As of June 2024, 117 families with children had leased up with the HOME voucher.

Housing stability outcomes for both Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing programs held steady from last year. External factors that impact the housing landscape and financial stability of participants continue to contribute to participants not being able to sustain housing once they find it.



Full implementation of coordinated entry has helped to identify appropriate levels of assistance based on household need. In SFY2020, new performance measures for Coordinated Entry Housing Navigation services were introduced and in SFY2023 data collection and performance reporting was further refined for the Housing Opportunity Grant Program. With these changes, SFY2023 created a new baseline by which to monitor performance for Coordinated Entry Housing Navigation services.

Housing Opportunity Grant Program Coordinated Entry Housing Navigation Services	SFY2023¹¹	SFY2024
Number of Households Served	1,255	2,750
% Program Exits to Permanent Housing¹²	37%	43%
Average # of Days from Enrollment to Re-housed or Stabilized	123	117

Data presented here reflects only housing navigation services provided by HOP-funded grantees; it does not represent all of the households in the Coordinated Entry system nor the full scope of the services being provided to those households. For additional data on Coordinated Entry, OEO recommends reviewing the following:

- Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care’s most recent Coordinated Entry Annual Evaluation report:
[2023-CE-Annual-Evaluation-Report.pdf \(helpingtohousevt.org\)](#)
- Institute for Community Alliances’ Vermont Coordinated Entry Dashboard:
<https://icalliances.org/vermont-coordinated-entry-dashboard>

State Fiscal Year 2024 saw many challenges for both service providers and the Vermonters they serve, including the ending of pandemic-era funding, changes in the State’s General Assistance Emergency Housing program, continued tightening of the housing market, and the impacts of inflation. Vermont’s shelter and service providers remained committed to serving program participants, while also navigating high rates of staff turnover and lengthy vacancies. Providing safe shelter, flexible financial and rental assistance, and housing navigation services are vital in the state’s effort to end homelessness.

Throughout the year, OEO worked to support grantees navigate these difficulties by providing:

- Logistical and financial support for infectious disease prevention and mitigation efforts, including ongoing close coordination with the Vermont Department of Health
- Increased flexible client-based financial assistance to meet the needs of participants
- Tailored learning opportunities to support the professional development of staff

¹¹ Data from previous years has not been included in this report due to changes in how these programs collected and reported on data in SFY2023.

¹² Permanent housing is used here to describe a variety of housing that is expected to long-term and stable, such as home ownership, rental housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, and staying with friends and family on a permanent basis.