

*Emergency Rental Assistance Program
Housing Stability Services
Annual Report
July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023*

The Department for Children and Families Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) awarded approximately \$14.5 million in federal funding under the Emergency Rental Assistance Program Housing Stability Services (ERAP-HSS) to 20 non-profit organizations¹ across Vermont for projects beginning in July 2022 and ending June 30, 2025. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) also administered ERAP-HSS grants during this period. Their subrecipients' results are not included in this report.

The U. S. Treasury made available funds for ERAP to assist eligible households who were otherwise unable to pay rent and utilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Housing Stability Services are provided to identify and support households applying for ERAP financial assistance, as well as support eligible households with assistance in finding and maintaining housing. Through March 31, 2023, eligibility requirements to receive Housing Stability Services included that households experienced financial hardship due directly or indirectly to the COVID-19 pandemic, were homeless or at risk of housing instability, and had an income \leq 80% of area median income (AMI). Eligibility was expanded in April 2023 so that households did not need to attest to experiencing financial hardship due directly or indirectly to the COVID-19 pandemic.

One grantee completed their grant at the end of SFY23, reducing the number of ERAP HSS providers to 19 for SFY24.

Funded activities included:

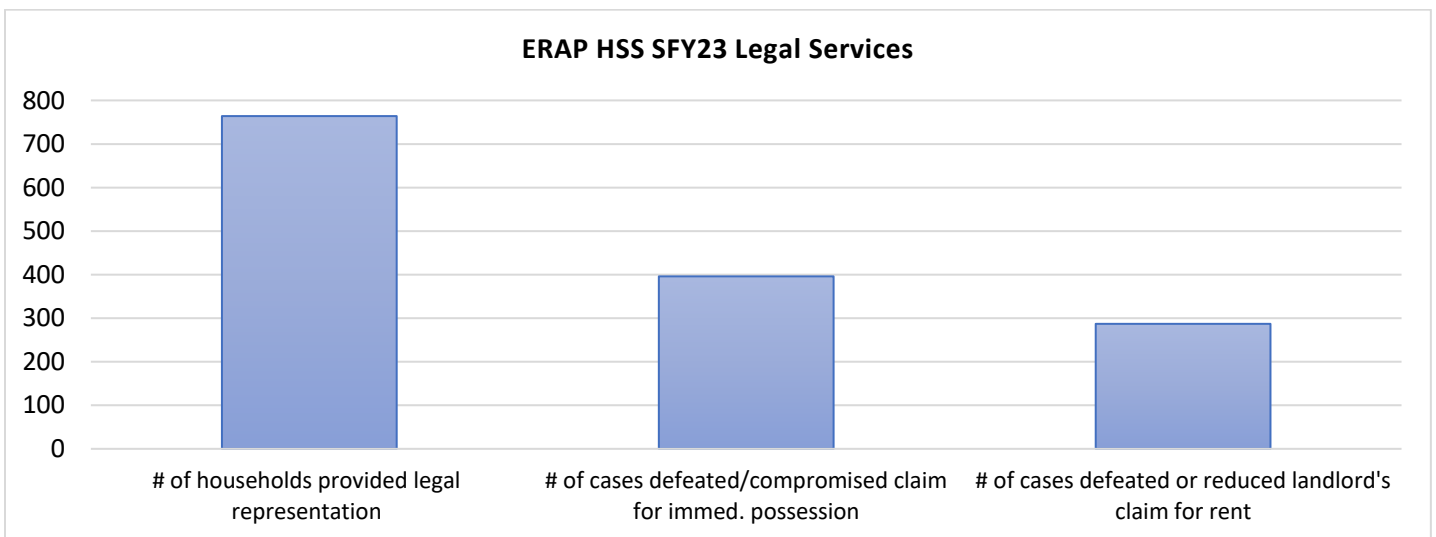
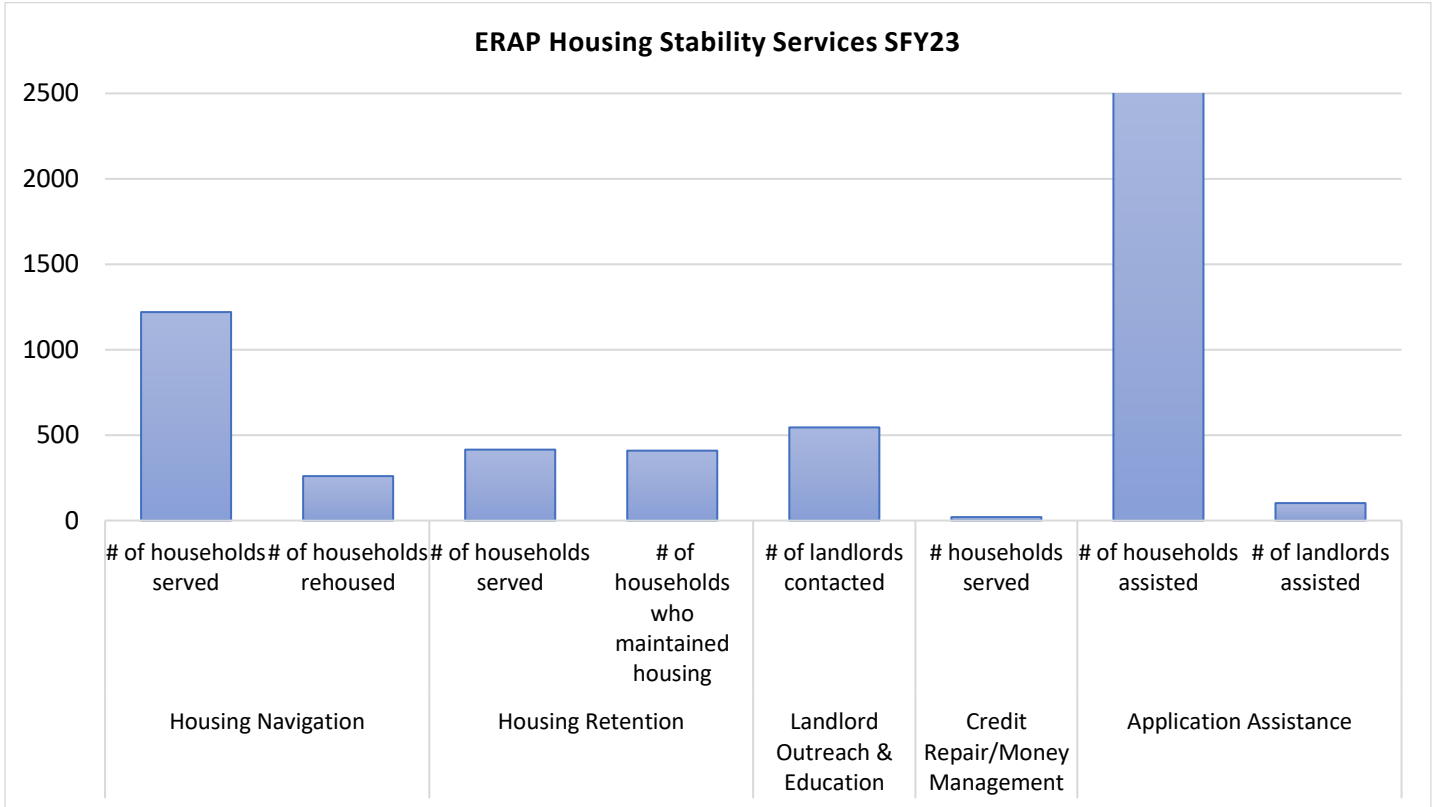
- Direct services support for application (including recertification) assistance
- Landlord outreach and education
- Housing navigation (finding housing)
- Housing retention (maintaining stable housing)
- Landlord-tenant mediation
- Legal services
- Credit repair/money management

Housing Stability Services projects achieved the following from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023:

- 1,220 households received housing navigation services,
- 415 households received housing retention services,
- 2,508 households and 102 landlords received application assistance,
- 545 landlords received outreach and education,

¹ ERAP Housing Stability Services Award Summaries are available at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/oao/resources/awards>

- 1,573 households received outreach about the availability of ERAP HSS-funded legal services,
- 773 households received initial legal consultation and/or were provided with representation,
- 396 cases (48.5%) with legal representation from an ERAP-funded legal services provider where tenant defeated or successfully compromised² the claim for immediate possession, and
- 287 cases (35.2%) where tenant defeated, reduced, or compromised² the landlord’s claim for rent.



² Helped the tenant extend the length of time before a Writ of Possession would be granted to the landlord by ≥ 30 days or helped the tenant reduce the amount of a rent payment claim.

Housing Stability Services providers worked with households facing complex challenges including a lack of housing, high rents (over Fair Market Rate), incomes that are not sufficient for households to meet rent without assistance, a competitive rental market and selective landlords, the loss of vouchers and rental assistance after not being able to find suitable housing within the required timeframe, limited transportation, and increasing evictions after the moratorium was lifted and the end of VERAP payments. Providers supported households as they navigated a challenging housing landscape compounded by some programs ending and some changing.

Providers also shared successes that were a result of rental funds and being able to support clients under program grant monies. Below are a few examples:

A client was struggling with health and mobility issues that were exacerbated by the pandemic. Their unit had failed several inspections and significant help was required to get it back into compliance or they would be evicted. The housing retention specialist was able to coordinate with various partners to put in place long-term assistance as well as meet pressing, short-term cleaning needs. *"...my client's housing is now safe and secure. This success would never have been possible without this grant."*

Burlington Housing Authority, Chittenden County

"We supported an individual to secure a one-bedroom in the same town where they are employed...[and] supported an individual to secure an efficiency apartment [where they] are no longer as isolated as they were while housed in [a] rural motel. Due to landlords reaching out to [the landlord liaison] directly when they have availability, we were able to house several households this quarter [including]...one household that had been homeless for 2 years."

Springfield Supported Housing Program, Windsor & northern Windham counties

"Some landlords remain inflexible on their requirements and criteria such as background checks, credit score, income, etc. and therefore, they are reluctant to rent to refugees though they are the most vetted people in the US given that...they go through a thorough screening process by several US Agencies. We developed a marketing tool that explains why it is worth renting to refugees [that we shared] with some landlords and noticed some change in their perception about renting to refugees and hope this will be embraced by the whole community of landlords and property managers in the future."

Ethiopian Community Development Council, Windham and Bennington counties.