

ERAP Service Descriptions and Total Households Served

Application Assistance

Six ERAP HSS providers were funded to help households and landlords with their Vermont Emergency Rental Assistance Program (VERAP) applications. This service was only funded for one year because rental payments ended at the end SFY23. In just one year, providers assisted 2,508 unique households and 102 landlords navigate their VERAP portal, and/or apply for housing payment support, and/or recertify for those payments. These providers also clarified changes to the program as they were rolled out, and helped households plan for the end of payment assistance. This included reviewing other potential resources households might be eligible for and providing referrals to partners when possible.

Housing Navigation Services

Eighteen grantees (i.e., all except for those providing legal services) were funded through ERAP to provide housing navigation services. Activities included:

- Reviewing barriers to housing and establishing action plans to overcome them,
- Entering households into Coordinated Entry,
- Searching for and applying for rental units, and, if applicable, housing vouchers,
- Helping clients obtain necessary documentation for rental and benefits' applications,
- Applying for benefits (3SquaresVT, Reach Up, disability benefits, etc.),
- Reviewing tenants' rights and responsibilities,
- Communicating with prospective landlords,
- Assistance finding short-term and transitional housing,
- Budgeting and other financial literacy skills,
- Providing employment services referrals, and
- Other allowed activities with the main goal of finding safe, affordable, long-term housing.

Providers served 3,748 unique households under ERAP housing navigation across this 3-year grant – 3,160 of whom were experiencing homelessness when they enrolled in ERAP services. Of those, 887 (23.7%) were rehoused during the grant period (see Appendix F for notes and clarifications on data tracking).

A success story excerpted from ECDC's (Ethiopian Community Development Council) 3-year narrative report: *A single mother, recently resettled and facing a court-mandated relocation, was supported by our housing staff and volunteers in quickly securing a new apartment. She was coached on how to pay rent, write checks, and communicate with her landlord. Through this wraparound support, she transitioned from unstable housing to independence, and is now employed and assisting others in navigating similar challenges.*

Housing Retention Services

Twelve providers were funded through ERAP to provide housing retention services. Allowed activities included:

- Assessing challenges to remaining housed,
- Establishing action plans to resolve challenges,
- Assistance communicating with landlords,
- Help applying for rental arrearage support,
- Help applying for other resources to stabilize the household's finances,
- Facilitating access to health resources,
- Support regarding habitability of the unit,
- Financial literacy support, and
- Partnering with, or warm hand-offs to, those who could provide specialized services.

Grantees served 1,427 households under ERAP housing retention, 466 of whom had been homeless prior to their current long-term housing. A significant number of households provided housing retention services within Vermont's ERAP model – 1,373 (96.2%) – remained housed while receiving those services.

A success story excerpted from John Graham Housing & Services' (JGHS) 3-year narrative report: *...one client was over \$4,000 behind on rent when we started working with them. They were unemployed, facing eviction, and did not qualify for HOP funding for back rent. Over the course of 8 months of consistent engagement, the eviction was dismissed, the client landed their highest-paying job to date and got themselves out of debt with their landlord. They remained housed and employed. This is typical of JGHS' success stories – the process is long and includes ongoing collaboration with employers and landlords. These services wouldn't have been available without the expanded capacity for Housing Navigation services and the staff for Housing Retention that ERAP funded.*

Landlord Outreach & Education Services

Landlord liaisons are dedicated to landlord outreach to build relationships and point landlords towards resources with an underlying goal of facilitating rental opportunities for households. They help to educate landlords on their rights and responsibilities regarding fair housing practices through coaching and directing them to informational sites and partners. Liaisons often serve as the main point of contact in their agency (sometimes their region) for landlords, property managers, and other rental providers. ERAP funds supported seven landlord liaison positions at six different organizations

Landlord liaisons funded under ERAP established and maintained relationships with landlords in their area, familiarizing them with the support they and their organization could provide, pointing them towards relevant resources (e.g., Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP), Landlord Relief Program (LRP), etc.), and help – as capacity and organizational objectives allowed – with informal tenant-landlord mediation. They also ensured landlords were aware of ERAP-funded formal mediation services. ERAP-funded landlord liaisons attended a

monthly community of practice, and bimonthly meetings with other ERAP partners to improve their engagement strategies, stay informed of, and learn more about resources for landlords. The information in Appendix D was compiled from landlord liaison input and based on their exchanges with landlords, and includes some of the top challenges landlords face along with suggestions for support.

Across this 3-year grant period, landlord liaisons established and/or maintained relationships with 807 landlords, and made 11,780 unique contacts with them. When feasible, and with the tenant's permission, they stepped in to connect tenants with services if they were struggling and not already receiving case management. Liaisons helped facilitate lease-ups for VHIP units and encouraged landlords to rent to their organization's clients. One landlord liaison noted they helped landlords apply for \$175,600 in Landlord Relief Program funds to repair properties and bring units back up to habitability standards.

A success story from Springfield Supported Housing Program succinctly highlighted the impact of having a liaison: *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 two years.*"

Legal Services

Two grantees were funded through ERAP to provide legal services for eligible Vermonters legal advice and/or representation to resolve housing issues. Vermont Law & Graduate School's program, which was funded under ERAP for one year of this 3-year grant, was focused on helping eligible veterans. Vermont Legal Aid provided legal services for the entire grant period, as well as VERAP application assistance during the first year of their grant.

During this three-year grant, providers reported that there were 5,255 eviction cases filed in court. There were 4,341 households that received outreach notifying them of the availability of ERAP-funded legal services, and 2,174 households received initial legal consultation and/or legal services (such as representation, help with preparing paperwork, etc.). Out of those, 1,614 cases were defeated or the claim from the landlord for immediate possession was compromised (i.e., a legal outcome in favor of their client)². And 1,235 cases had an outcome where the landlord's claim for rent was defeated or reduced².

Vermont Legal Aid detailed in their narrative common issues they saw during the grant period with eviction proceedings and retaliatory actions by landlords, which are listed in Appendix E.

An anonymized success story, excerpted from Vermont Legal Aid's 3-year narrative report: *A man rented a single-family home for over a decade. For years the tenant had a cordial relationship with the landlord's office manager, who credited his rent account based on repairs he'd made to the property. Many repairs were needed, including to the septic system, which was overflowing into the front yard when a non-payment eviction was filed. The new office manager did not respond kindly when he complained about repairs needed. Although he had arranged to move, the landlord's lawyer refused to settle. We went to trial and successfully*

showed the court that the office manager's rent records were not admissible to prove he owed rent. The court dismissed the case, and when his new unit was available, the tenant moved.

Credit Repair & Money Management Services

Budgeting and credit repair work are fundamental tools of housing stability. Although only one ERAP HSS provider – Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO) – applied for and was granted funding for this service, they were able to help 311 unique households with classroom training and/or one-to-one coaching to improve their financial literacy and self-sufficiency.

Here is one success story excerpted and summarized from CVOEO's 3-year narrative report: Partners working with a previously homeless client linked them up for help through CVOEO for resources such as the Tenant Skills Class. They also informed the client of the ERAP-funded Credit Building and Money Management Class, which they then attended. The client continued working with CVOEO staff to maintain their housing *while* building credit and money management skills, having recognized that these skills take time and effort.