



**Agency of Human Services, Department for Children and Families,
Commissioner's Office**

280 State Drive, HC 1 North, Waterbury, VT 05671-1080

dcf.vermont.gov, Phone: 802-241-0927, Fax: 802-241-0950

October 9, 2026

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for taking the time to share experiences and concerns regarding the implementation of Level 4 of the Vermont Housing Response Continuum (VHRC).

The experiences described long wait times, dropped calls, difficulty obtaining timely information, confusion about program requirements, challenges coordinating with providers, and the consequences of housing instability for individuals and families. We recognize the seriousness of these incidents and agree that they are deeply concerning. We understand that for someone experiencing homelessness, a delay of hours or days may affect the person's sense of safety, ability to maintain employment or attend school, ability to stay connected to family and community supports, and access to medical care.

We appreciate the willingness of community partners and individuals to share them with us and we take them seriously.

At the same time, we believe it is important to distinguish between the challenges experienced during the early implementation of a significant system change and the way the program is operating currently. Transitioning to the new Level 4 model is a huge undertaking. The transition has been challenging for households, service providers, hotels, and to program staff. We have been actively monitoring concerns, including those mentioned above, and making operational changes as problems have been identified. Some of those changes are outlined below.

Improving Access to Level 4 of the VHRC

We know that phone access was a significant challenge during the initial implementation. We have taken steps to improve the process and continue to monitor call volume, wait times, dropped calls, and other barriers to access.



We are constantly analyzing data to identify trends and potential improvements. One significant change was the elimination of the separate assessment queue. Previously, callers completed an initial health checklist and then were placed into another queue for an assessment. As of last week, individuals needing HOU-SING assessments work with eligibility workers to complete the tool during the same call. This new practice reduces transfers and additional calls, eliminating the risk of dropped calls, increased delays, and transfers, thus making the process more efficient and hopefully less stressful. We will continue to monitor access and make changes when we identify barriers.

Strengthening Communication with Community Providers

We also recognize the importance of effective communication between the state and our partners working directly with Vermonters experiencing homelessness.

The Hotel Communications email (AHS.DCFESDHotelCommunication@vermont.gov) remains active and is used daily with hotel managers. The VHRC email box (AHS.DCFVHRCLevel4@vermont.gov) is available to community partners. In addition, the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner have provided direct email contacts to providers, and the Assistant Operations email (AHS.DCFESDGAAops@vermont.gov) is available as another avenue for communication and escalation.

These channels are intended to give providers multiple ways to raise concerns, seek clarification, and request assistance with individual households. We encourage our community partners to use these avenues when an issue is not being resolved through the ordinary process. We need to hear when something is not working so we can address it. We have heard concerns regarding the current status of 211.

There has been a shift in the role of 211. During the initial implementation of Level 4 of VHRC, it is imperative that fidelity in the administration of the risk stratification tool is maintained. Through internal administration we gain an understanding of the gaps in services and challenges within the hotel system. DCF is also well suited to meet the rigid noticing requirements. There will be opportunities as the program becomes more stable to explore other options for community partner involvement. Vermont 211 continues to be a trusted partner for DCF – we are in frequent contact with them, continue to monitor data, and are meeting with other states to learn how they utilize that resource as well.



Initial Seven-Day period for Housing Plan Development

We want to clarify an important point regarding the seven-day period initial placement. The purpose of the seven-day period is to support people in identifying potential housing opportunities and establishing connections to housing/service providers through the development of initial housing plans. We believe that it is imperative that barriers to stability are identified early and appropriate timelines established to address the barriers. We know that households are unlikely to obtain permanent housing within seven days. Case managers and other housing partners are instrumental to identifying both short and long-term goals/solutions.

Clarifying Roles and Reducing Duplication

Several of the examples provided also highlight the need for better communication about the different functions within the system.

The state's eligibility and risk assessment serves a specific purpose: determining eligibility and appropriate level within the Vermont Homelessness Response Continuum. Coordinated Entry is a broader process that standardizes the way individuals and families are assessed for and referred to the housing and services they need for housing stability. We understand that these distinctions can be confusing. We have heard concerns about clients being asked to repeat information, being given housing-related instructions that do not align with the work of their case manager, and confusion about whether a risk assessment used for identifying risk level for Level 4 access is the same as a Coordinated Entry. We look forward to working with our partners to reduce the confusion. As always, we will continue to identify ways to eliminate duplication, align our efforts, and communicate clearly.

Keeping People Connected to Their Communities

We share the value that people should be placed near their schools, medical providers, employment, families, and other support systems. As hotel and shelter capacity allows, we strive to place households in their preferred communities. We will continue to explore opportunities to support this goal, including how we prioritize and invest our resources across the state.

Continuing to Listen and Improve

Continuous feedback is important to us, and we hope to maintain open lines of communication. This is especially important as the implementation of the Continuum





occurs in stages. We want to make sure we build on what is working well and collaborate to address barriers.

We hope we can all agree that this level of transition is significant and that there will be challenges that require partnership, collaboration and commitment to improvement. We appreciate the work that community organizations are doing every day to support Vermonters experiencing homelessness. We will continue monitoring the implementation and making adjustments as needed. Ultimately, our shared goal is to have a system that is accessible, responsive, transparent, and humane. One that recognizes the urgency of a housing crisis while also connecting people to the supports and services they need to meet their goals.

Thank you again for sharing these experiences and for your continued partnership in serving Vermonters.

Sincerely,

Sandi Raymond Hoffman, Department for Children and Families Commissioner

Miranda Gray, Economic Services Deputy Commissioner

Lily Sojourner, Office of Economic Opportunity Director

