

## General/Emergency Temporary Housing Waiver and Variance of Rules

Due to COVID-19 the General Assistance temporary housing program has been modified to move away from categorical eligibility to better assist with housing Vermonters who are homeless. This program is commonly referred to as the motel voucher program. Below is a statement of the rules that currently govern this program. The authority to waive or vary the rules is in Act 140 Section 13 which amends Act 91 Section 4. Act 140 was signed into law on July 6, 2020. The authority to waive or vary rules is in effect until March 31, 2021. While the Department does not intend on making frequent changes to these rules, please always look for the most current version posted on the Economic Services Division COVID-19 webpage at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/covid19>.

### Current Rules October 19, 2020

#### **GA-10**      **Homeless Vermonter**

If you are homeless, live in Vermont, and have nowhere to stay, you may be eligible to have the Economic Services Division (ESD) pay to house you in a hotel/motel.

- **To apply** call the Benefits Services Center at 1-800-479-6151.

#### **GA-20**      **GA rule 2603 Definitions**

All definitions in General Assistance rule 2603 apply to these rules.

#### **GA-30**      **U.S. Citizen**

You must be a U.S. Citizen or legal alien

## **GA-40**      **Vermont Resident**

You must intend on living in Vermont. You are not eligible for a motel voucher if you have come to Vermont for the purpose of receiving General Assistance. (See 33 V.S.A. 2107).

- Coming to Vermont without a housing plan is evidence that you have come into the state to receive General Assistance.

If you are not planning on staying in Vermont assistance will be limited to that which will get you to a state border. [See 33 V.S.A. 2103(d)].

## **GA-50**      **Shelter Space**

The Department won't house you in a hotel/motel if space is available in a shelter. *We will let you know if shelter space is available when you apply.*

If you have a physical or mental disability:

- Your local shelter may be able to make special arrangements to help you stay there. This is called a *reasonable accommodation*.
- Your ESD worker can help you talk to your local shelter about your need for an accommodation.

If your local shelter can't make a reasonable accommodation so the shelter is accessible to you:

- Please ask the Department for a reasonable accommodation
- If approved and you meet other requirements, a hotel/motel room will be provided.

### **GA-50.1**      **Refusal of Shelter Space or Asked to Leave a Shelter**

The Department won't house you in a hotel/motel if in the last 30 days:

- You did not accept an available shelter space. *OR*
- You were asked to leave a shelter for not following the rules.

## **GA-60**      **Voluntarily Left a Place Where You Could Have Stayed**

The Department won't house you in a hotel/motel if you voluntarily left a place where you could have stayed in the last 90 days — unless you left for health or safety reasons.

**GA-70**      **Income Limit**

You must have gross monthly income at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). This includes everyone’s income:

- From all sources.
- Before things like taxes are taken off (*gross income*).

# People in Household	Maximum Gross Monthly Income (185% of FPL)	# People in Household	Maximum Gross Monthly Income (185% of FPL)
1	\$1,969	6	\$5,421
2	\$2,659	7	\$6,113
3	\$3,349	8	\$6,803
4	\$4,041	9	\$7,495
5	\$4,731	10	\$8,187

For each additional person add \$692.

**GA-80**      **Resource Limit**

You may not have more than \$2,250 in liquid assets. This includes everyone in the household.

- Liquid assets are cash or assets that can be easily changed to cash. For example: gift cards, bank accounts, retirement funds, savings certificates, stocks, bonds, and trust accounts.
- This does not include an ABLE Account or PASS plan.

**GA-100**      **Housing Case Management/Coordinated Entry**

For the Department to continue to house you in a hotel/motel you must work with a housing agency to find long term housing. *If you need help, we can connect you with the right person when you call to apply for more temporary housing.*

**GA-110**      **Housing Separate Applicant Households Together**

Individuals who are not members of the same applicant household (see GA-20) may request to be housed together in the same hotel/motel room.

- The Department will house no more than two separate applicants together.
- You must each complete a separate application and be approved for a hotel/motel voucher individually. *Unless you have a reasonable accommodation to have a caretaker reside with you.*
- Each applicant must indicate at the time of the interview that they would like to be housed with the other individual. *If the Department has safety concerns it may choose to house the applicants separately.*
- Each applicant must continue to meet all program requirements.
- The applicants' income will be considered together and calculated as one household for the purposes of determining the 30 percent income contribution and amount of time you may both need to house yourselves.

#### **GA-120      Period of Ineligibility**

You will not be eligible to be placed in a hotel/motel by the Department for a period of time if you are asked to leave a hotel/motel for:

- Violent criminal behavior
- Attempted violent criminal behavior
- Theft from hotel/motel or guests
- Disturbing other guests' quiet enjoyment of the property
- Behavior consistent with use, sale, distribution, manufacturing, or transport of illegal drugs on the property
- Destruction of property, including reckless disregard of basic cleanliness
- Use of lighted tobacco products, tobacco substitutes, or marijuana, in any form, in any space on the property

If it is determined by the Department that you are not eligible for a period, the Department will not pay for you to stay in a hotel/motel during that time. This is called a Period of Ineligibility (POI).

- For a first violation, the POI is 15 days. *You will be rehoused after serving 7 days of the POI if your case worker informs the Department that you are working with them to find permanent housing.*
- For a second and any other violations, the POI will be 30 days.

If you are placed on a period of ineligibility (POI) and you disagree with the decision, you

may:

- Ask the Human Services Board for a fair hearing. *You'll get to tell your side of the story. And you can have a person you trust help you.*
- Ask to be housed in another hotel/motel while waiting for the recommendation from the fair hearing officer.
- Call 1-800-889-2047 to see if you qualify for free help from Vermont Legal Aid.

To request a fair hearing, call the Department at 1-800-479-6151. If you ask for a fair hearing, one will be scheduled usually within 10 days. Before the hearing, the Department will give you or your representative a copy of the evidence we will be presenting. If the hearing officer agrees with our decision, the POI will begin right away. If you don't show up to the hearing, the Department will not continue to house you and your POI will begin right away.

If you ask to be rehoused and you do not ask for a fair hearing within three days, your POI will begin.

Please let the Department know if you have a physical, mental, or learning disability that:

- Makes it hard for you to follow the rules at the motel/hotel, or
- Makes it hard for you to participate at a fair hearing.

You may be entitled to ask for a reasonable accommodation. This could include changing how the program is administered to give you an equal opportunity to participate.

### **RIGHT TO A FAIR HEARING**

If you disagree with a decision we made, you may ask for a fair hearing. The Human Services Board will:

- Hold a hearing within 10 days (usually).
- Listen to your side of the story.
- Review the facts fairly and objectively.
- Decide if the decision should be upheld or reversed.

You must ask for a fair hearing within 90 days of getting a notice. To do so, call the Department at 1-800-479-6151 or the Human Services Board at (802) 828-2536. You can get someone you trust to help you.

## **RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

If you have a disability, you may be entitled to program modifications, and/or free aids & services to help you get benefits. This is called *reasonable accommodations*. Examples include:

- Having someone write your answers down.
- Giving you documents in other formats. For example: large print, audio, or Braille.
- Having a support person with you when you talk to us.
- Meeting in your home or by phone.
- Giving you more time to get us the documents we need.

Call 1-800-479-6151 if you need this help.

## **NEED LEGAL HELP?**

Call 1-800-889-2047 to see if you qualify for free help from Vermont Legal Aid.

## **HAVE QUESTIONS?**

Ask your worker or call 1-800-479-6151.

## **LEARN MORE**

Go to <https://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/covid19>. You can also call 1-800-479- 6151 to learn more about temporary housing during COVID-19.

### **If you need interpretation services...**

(Arabic) 1-855-247-3092 إذا أنت ترغب خدمات الترجمة الفورية اتصل برقم

Ako su Vam potrebne usluge tumačenja, pozovite 1-855-247-3092. (Bosnian)

ကောင်းပြန် ဝန်ဆောင်မှုလုပ်ငန်းကိုအလိုရှိပါက 1-855-247-3092 သို့ဖုန်းဆက်ခေါ်ပါ။ (Burmese)

Si vous avez besoin de services d'interprétation, appelez le 1-855-247-3092. (French)

Mugihe woba ushaka impfashanyo yo gusigurirwa, hamagara uyu murongo 1-855-247-3092. (Kirundi)

यदि तपाईंलाई दोभाषे सेवाको जरुरत परेमा 1-855-247-3092 मा कल गनुरहोस्। (Nepali)

Haddii aad u baahan tahay adeegyo turjumaan, wac 1-855-247-3092. (Somali)

Si usted necesita servicios de interpretación, llame al 1-855-247-3092. (Spanish)

Ikiwa unahitaji huduma za ukalimani, piga simu 1-855-247-3092. (Swahili)

Nếu quý vị cần dịch vụ thông ngôn, hãy gọi 1-855-247-3092. (Vietnamese)