**Family Unification Program (FUP)**

Appendix Outlining Intra-Departmental Coordination & Process for Identifying and Referring Eligible Participants

**Staff Liaisons**
The following staff are responsible for transmitting and accepting FUP referrals.

**AHS/DCF:**
Primary: Forrest Gardner, Housing Program Officer, Office of Economic Opportunity  
(802) 585-4889  forrest.gardner@vermont.gov

Backups:
- Lily Sojourner, Community Services Program Manager, Office of Economic Opportunity  
lily.sojourner@vermont.gov
- Kristin Lyons, Administrative Services Coordinator, Office of Economic Opportunity,  
kristin.lyons@vermont.gov

**VSHA:**
Primary: Intake Client Services Specialist, VT State Housing Authority (VSHA) – Position Vacant,  
(802) 828-3295

Backup: Bethany Lunn, Intake Coordinator, VT State Housing Authority (VSHA), bethany@vsha.org

**Program Coordination**
The following staff meet quarterly to ensure coordination between referring programs, service providers and rental assistance providers.

- DCF Economic Services Division (ESD): Christine Dorer, Benefits Program Assistant Administrator
- DCF Family Services Division (FSD): Amanda Churchill, Policy and Practice Specialist and Youth Development Program (YDP) Manager
- DCF Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO): Forrest Gardner¹, Housing Program Officer
- DCF Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO): Sarah Phillips, Chief Administrator
- DCF Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO): Lily Sojourner, Community Services Program Manager

¹ Revised 12/8/21
VT State Housing Authority (VSHA): Kelli Cheney, Housing Program Services Director
VT State Housing Authority (VSHA): Bethany Lunn, Intake Coordinator

1 OEO's Housing Program Officer convenes quarterly program coordination meetings
Overview of Referral & Application Process

Referring Agency - Youth Development Program (YDP), Family Services Division (FSD), Family Supportive Housing (FSH), Reach Up or through Coordinated Entry

1. Identify families & youth who may be eligible for & interested in the program.

2. Do an initial screen for eligibility.

   TO BE ELIGIBLE:
   ✓ The family/youth must be involved with YDP, FSD, FSH or Reach Up.
   ✓ The applicant may be a:
     Family
     If the lack of adequate housing is a factor in their child being:
     a. Placed in out-of-home care OR
     b. Able to return home from out-of-home care
     Youth
     If they:
     a. Left foster care at age 16 or older (or will leave within 90 days)
     b. Are currently between the ages of 18 and 24 AND
     c. Are homeless/at risk of becoming homeless (see definition on pages 7 & 8)

3. Make sure required case management is in place: at least 12 months for families and 36 months for youth. See pages 5 & 6 for more information about case management.

4. Complete the Program Referral:
   ‣ Get the form online at http://dcf.vermont.gov/oeo/FUP.
   ‣ Have the appropriate supervisor/district director/district manager sign it to confirm categorical eligibility.
   ‣ Have the housing case manager sign it to confirm housing case management commitment.

5. Complete the Documentation of Inadequate Housing:
   ‣ Get the form online at http://dcf.vermont.gov/oeo/FUP.
   ‣ Sign the form to certify that the family/youth is currently living in inadequate housing.

6. Complete the Pre-Application for Family Unification Voucher:
   ‣ Get the form online at http://dcf.vermont.gov/oeo/FUP.
   ‣ Have all adult household members provide the income information and sign this form.

7. Email the completed forms to AHS.DCFFUVReferrals@vermont.gov.
DCF Central Office Staff

1. Email the referring agency, signing authority and case manager to confirm receipt of the referral. Include the client’s name in the body of the email, not the subject line.

2. Place the family/youth on the Centralized Referral List.

3. Provide the referring agency with a Client Information Letter to share with the household added to the list.

4. Rank the priority families and youth on the list.

Prioritize eligible youth/families in the following order:
1. Involved with the Family Services Division & urgency factor score
2. Urgency factor score
3. Date of referral

Eligible households get one point for each of the following urgency factors:
- Meets the AHS/HUD definition of homeless (see definition on pages 7 & 8)
- Has had multiple episodes of homelessness
- Has at least one child under the age of six

5. When VSHA notifies DCF that additional FUP vouchers are available:
   - Select the appropriate number of names from the list — according to the priority.
   - Review the names to make sure they’re still eligible and a priority (e.g., check with YDP Policy and Practice Specialist, and Reach Up Program Manager).

6. Ask the case manager for updates and recertifications, as defined below:
   - Pre-Application for Family Unification Voucher:
     - If there are no changes and the form is more than 60 days old, case manager may confirm with household via phone, sign and date.
     - If there are changes regardless of the timeframe, the household must complete and sign a new form.
   - Documentation of Inadequate Housing:
     - If the housing situation has not changed, recertify if more than 60 days old.
     - If the housing situation has changed regardless of timeframe, complete and submit a new form.
   - Program Referral Form:
     - Update housing case management if there have been changes since initial referral.

7. Send the names of family/youth being referred along with all their application materials to the Intake Client Services Specialist at VSHA.
VSHA Staff

1. Review the names and application materials received from DCF and request a full application.

2. Determine whether the youth/families meet additional eligibility requirements imposed by HUD — consistent with administration of the federal housing choice voucher program (HCV).

3. Notify youth/families, referring agencies/organizations, case managers and DCF Central Office whether they are eligible.

4. If eligible, issue federal Section 8 Housing Choice vouchers to them.
   - ✓ There is no time limit on vouchers issued to families.
   - ✓ There is a 36-month limit on vouchers issued to youth.

5. Conduct all other processes relating to voucher administration.

If the process outlined above is modified, eligible applicants already on the Centralized Referral List will keep their priority position on any new waiting list.

Appeal of Eligibility Determination
An applicant who is denied participation in the program based on HUD or VSHA guidelines will be notified, in writing, of their right to appeal the decision.

They may submit a written request for an informal appeal and supporting documentation (e.g., self-statement and letters of recommendation) to:

Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA)
One Prospect Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05602
Fax: (802) 828-3248

VSHA could decide to waive one or more eligibility restrictions and issue a voucher to the youth/family based on:

- The nature of the information presented,
- Mitigating factors, and
- Plans developed to address past issues.
DEFINITIONS

Case Management for Families:
*Case management will be provided for a minimum of 12 months, with face-to-face meetings at least once a month.*

Case management may be provided by DCF staff or community agencies. In many cases, programs will be able to provide services more frequently and for a longer period. After the first year in the program, the frequency of in-person meetings may be adjusted based on how the families are proceeding with individual plans. All parties understand that during times of crisis or transition, they may require additional or more frequent supports.

While the model, amount and duration of services will vary by program and the needs of the family, services will at least include:

1. Establishing (through consultation with the client, DCF and other engaged providers) a lead case manager or coordinator and communication criteria to ensure supports are integrated.

2. Helping them write a housing plan and set personal goals.

3. Helping them identify their strengths, opportunities and any underlying issues that could undermine housing stability.

4. Helping them get and keep stable housing that they can afford. *VSHA’s local field rep will primarily be responsible for the housing search.*

5. Providing them with information about other appropriate services and encouraging them to take appropriate action to address any barriers.

6. Identifying the appropriate level of support for each family.

7. Developing effective working relationships and agreements with landlords. This includes providing the landlord with contact information of people to contact if problems come up

8. Providing follow-up case management after they’ve moved into permanent housing.

9. Communicating with VSHA when a family ceases to be eligible for the Family Unification Program — or no longer requires the same level of service — so VSHA can graduate them from the program. In some cases, this may involve transitioning them to other federal subsidy programs that are less service intensive.
Case Management for Youth:
*Case management will be provided for a minimum of 36 months, with face-to-face meetings at least once a month.*

Once a youth has brought a unit under contract with their transitional Family Unification voucher, and if the VSHA Section 8 waiting list is open, an application may be submitted under the Transitional Housing Preference which is open to VSHA’s / HUD’s Family Unification program for Youth in Transition.

After the first year on the program, the frequency of in-person meetings with clients may be adjusted based on how they’re proceeding with individual plans. All parties understand that during times of crisis or transition, youth may require additional or more frequent supports. Youth who are thriving and in good standing with their landlord will not require the same level of services. At the first-year assessment, youth should be made aware of VSHA’s Family Self Sufficiency program.

Case planning will be provided to youth based on the participant’s individual strengths, needs, goals, and resources, to include:

- Housing education and home management
- Budget and financial management
- Career preparation
- Access to higher education
- Access to health care and risk prevention
- Self-sufficiency with transportation
- Establishing and maintaining connections with caring adults and peers

In addition to the services described above, eligible youth may be supported by other agencies such as Designated Agencies, Reach Up, Parent Child Centers, etc.

Coordinated Entry (CE)
A process to streamline access to homeless and housing assistance for households experiencing a housing crisis. CE is implemented under the oversight of the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness and the Chittenden Homeless Alliance. It establishes clear, uniform processes to identify and refer households needing housing help, assess housing needs, and match households to housing assistance (e.g., supports, units and subsidies) to meet their needs. In CE, local partners in the Continuum of Care (CoC) maintain a community-wide master list of households experiencing homelessness. The CE assessment and master list provide a way to identify households who may be eligible for FUP. When a household is identified through Coordinated Entry, the CE partners identify a case management sponsor, the local district office verifies eligibility and a referral form is sent to the DCF central office. To make a CE referral please see: [http://helpingtohousevt.org/whatwedo/coordinatedentry/overview/](http://helpingtohousevt.org/whatwedo/coordinatedentry/overview/)
# AHS/HUD Definition of Homelessness

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<th>CATEGORY 1</th>
<th>Literally Homeless</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Individual/family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:</strong></td>
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<td>1. Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;</td>
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<td>2. Is living in supervised publicly or privately-operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low-income individuals); OR</td>
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<td>3. Is exiting an institution where (s)he resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.</td>
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<th>CATEGORY 2</th>
<th>At imminent risk of homelessness</th>
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<td><strong>Individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that:</strong></td>
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<td>1. Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance,</td>
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<td>2. No subsequent residence has been identified, AND</td>
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<td>3. The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks (e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks) needed to obtain other permanent housing.</td>
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### CATEGORY 3  
**Homeless under other federal statutes**

Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who:

- Are defined as homeless under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (42 U.S.C. 5732a, section 387), the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9832, section 637), the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e-2, section 41403), the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b(h), section 330(h)), the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2012, section 3), the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786(b), section 17(b)) or McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a, section 725);

- Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing at any time during the 60 days immediately preceding the date of application for homeless assistance;

- Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the preceding 60-days; **AND**

- Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse (including neglect), the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or two or more barriers to employment, which include the lack of a high school degree or General Education Development (GED), illiteracy, low English proficiency, a history of incarceration or detention for criminal activity, and a history of unstable employment.

### CATEGORY 4  
**Fleeing/ attempting to flee domestic violence**

Any individual or family who:

- Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member, including a child, that has either taken place within the individual’s or family’s primary nighttime residence or has made the individual or family afraid to return to their primary nighttime residence;

- Has no other residence; **AND**

- Lacks the resources or support networks (e.g., family, friends, faith-based or other social networks) to obtain other permanent housing.