

## *Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP) Annual Report - State Fiscal Year 2018*

Vermont's Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP), formerly known as the Emergency Solutions Grant program, administered by the State Office of Economic Opportunity, provides a blend of state and federal<sup>1</sup> funding to support operations, staffing, and homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing assistance at approximately 39 non-profit emergency shelter, transitional housing, and prevention programs serving all regions of the state. This past year, approximately \$1.9 million in funds from the General Assistance Emergency Housing program was strategically invested under the Housing Opportunity Grant Program into new community-based programs designed to decrease reliance on motels to shelter homeless persons and families. These GA funds supported 16 initiatives, and the outcomes from these projects are included as part of this statewide report.

The State Office of Economic Opportunity works in close partnership with both HUD-recognized Homeless Continua of Care – Chittenden County and the Balance of State (i.e., the Chittenden Homeless Alliance and the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness) - to consult on performance measurement, data management, and developing coordinated entry within both systems of care. This report details the services and shelter provided by publicly-funded, privately operated non-profit partners. It provides insight into changes in the population experiencing homelessness in Vermont, as it details the level of service and results achieved by this system of care. It is best understood in tandem with reports from the General Assistance program and the statewide homeless Point-in-Time count.

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Emergency Solutions Grant and Global Commitment Investment

## Overnights Sheltered

Between July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018, Vermont's publicly-funded emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, and youth shelters, reported the following:

- **3,872** persons (58% single adults and 42% in families with children) sheltered for a total of **194,505** bednights.<sup>2</sup>
- **2,770** were adults and **1,102** were children under the age of 18.
- The average length of stay was approximately **50** days.

Housing Opportunity Grant Program funds support basic operations and essential services at 36 overnight emergency shelters, including 9 warming shelters open only during cold weather months and 11 shelters for persons fleeing domestic/sexual violence. Additionally, 8 programs provided emergency shelter in scattered site apartments, ranging in size from 1 to 3 bedrooms. Shelters range in size from only a few rooms for families to more than 37 beds for single adults.

## Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing

Other HOP-funded programs provide homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing assistance such as housing support services and financial aid to prevent eviction or help a family enter new housing. Using the AHS/HUD definition, homelessness prevention targets assistance to those who are "at-risk of homelessness" (e.g., "couch surfing", exiting an institution, or facing eviction) whereas rapid re-housing serves those experiencing literal homelessness (e.g., sleeping in a place not meant for habitation or staying in an emergency shelter). These activities provided housing stability for **1,976** households (280 more households than in the previous year). Approximately 29% of these households were literally homeless, contrasted with 45% in SFY 2017, demonstrating a shift towards greater homelessness prevention focus.

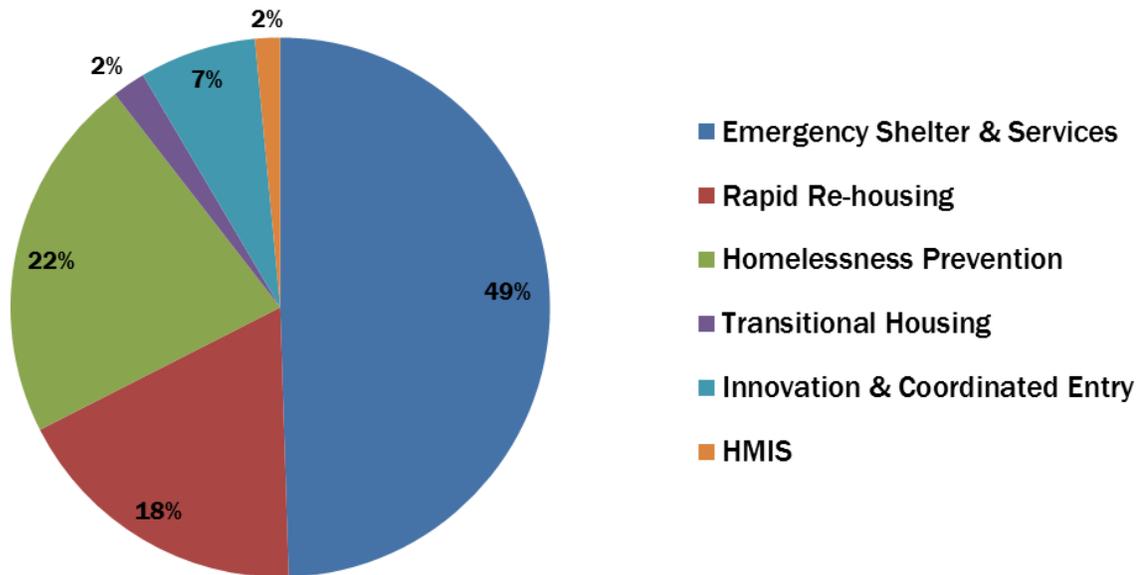
Both homelessness prevention and rapid-rehousing strategies provide housing relocation and stabilization support such as housing search and placement, landlord-tenant mediation, housing case management, follow-up or supportive services to help maintain housing, money management and financial assistance such as security deposits, utility payments and deposits, moving costs, rental arrearages and short-term rental assistance.

Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing services in this report are only those paid for in whole or part with Housing Opportunity Grant Program dollars. Numbers do not reflect other activities by these grantee providers paid for with funding such as Crisis Fuel, Vermont Rental Subsidy, FEMA, or Community Services Block Grants. Though in reality, community-based providers often combine these various resources in order to meet the presenting needs.

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<sup>2</sup> One bednight = One person sheltered for one night. Total bednights = Number of persons x the number of nights sheltered.

## Housing Opportunity Grant Program SFY 2018 Awards



More than \$6.9 million in state and federal funding was awarded under the Housing Opportunity Grant program. As of State Fiscal Year 2016, funding previously awarded under the “Community Housing Grant Program” and the “Emergency Solutions Grant Program” was consolidated into a single grant program to create greater flexibility, maximize resources, and streamline administration. More than \$1.9 million in funds from the General Assistance Emergency Housing program was invested in 16 projects through the Housing Opportunity Grant Program to create or expand community capacity to meet emergency shelter needs in the following AHS districts: Addison, Barre, Bennington, Burlington, Brattleboro, Hartford, Rutland, St. Johnsbury and Newport. This was an increase of nearly \$430,000 over SFY 17 GA community investments .

Approximately 45% of all HOP funds supported direct service staff, such as shelter case managers or housing specialists. Just under 20% of funds supported basic shelter operations, such as utilities, rent, building insurance, shelter supplies or routine maintenance. More than \$1.3 million was provided in client financial or rental assistance such as security deposit, rental or utility arrearages, and/or short- and medium-term rental assistance. The remaining funds (approximately \$540,000) supported the implementation of HMIS, coordinated entry, and innovative projects such as landlord liaisons.

Between SFY 2017 and SFY 2018 the percentage of HOP funds spent on Emergency Shelter increased from 39% to 49% largely due to GA community investments in seasonal shelter. As mentioned, Rapid Re-Housing spending declined as Homelessness Prevention funding increased. A reclassification of short-term scattered site apartments to Emergency Shelter explains the seeming decrease in funding for Transitional Housing (from 11% to 2%).

## **Emergency Shelter Persons Served, Demographics, Bednights & Length of Stay**

While the number of persons staying in publicly-funded emergency shelters decreased slightly last year, the number of children increased, and the average length of stay in shelters increased significantly. Approximately 39% of sheltered children (429, an 19% increase from last year's 361) and 34% of families (257) spent their stay at a domestic/sexual violence shelter. Approximately 14% of all adults (771) served by shelters, homelessness prevention or rapid re-housing programs were between the age of 18 and 24, and just 6% were elderly (332). Of all those served, other special subpopulations identified include those who are: Veterans (2%); experienced chronic homelessness<sup>3</sup> (7%); have a severe mental illness (15%); have chronic substance abuse (7%); living with another disability (15%).

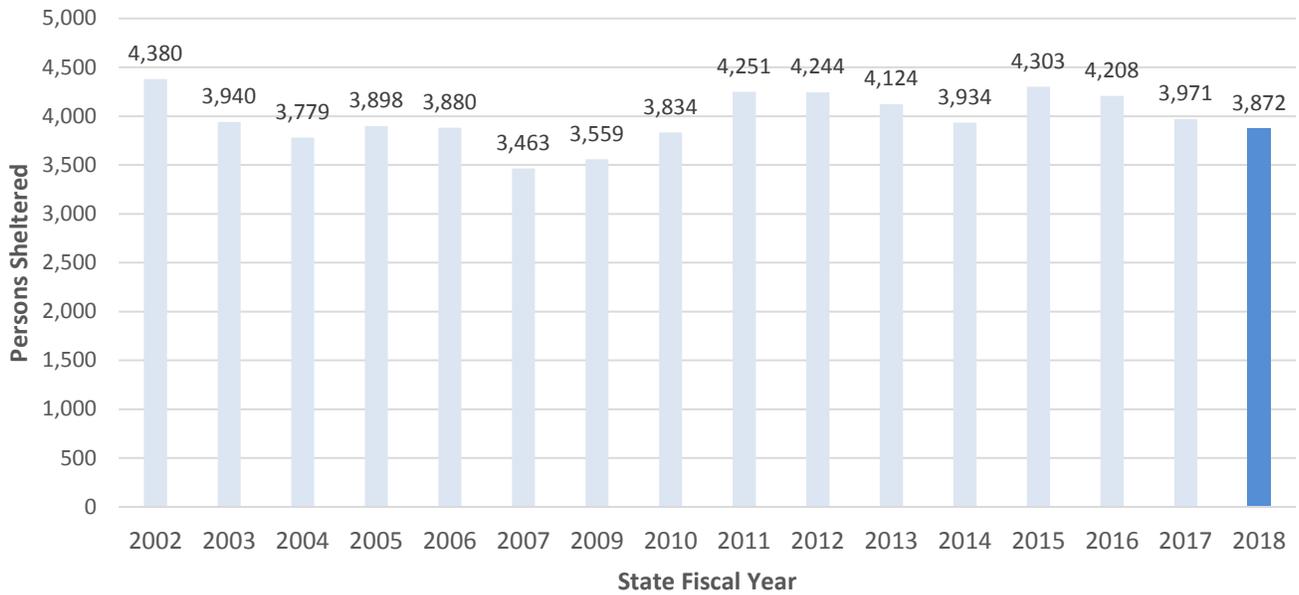
Total persons served by shelters reflects changes in the homeless population, but is also impacted by changes in homeless shelter capacity. For example, this year's report excludes a year-round shelter that no longer receives public funds.

Notably, the average length of stay in homeless shelters is at its highest level in more than 17 years. There continue to be significant barriers for shelter guests to move out of emergency settings into housing. Lack of available rentals, the high cost of rent, very low incomes, and tenant history are driving factors in the ability to quickly re-stabilize into housing. This difficulty in finding permanent housing artificially constrains the number of persons that can be sheltered within existing capacity.

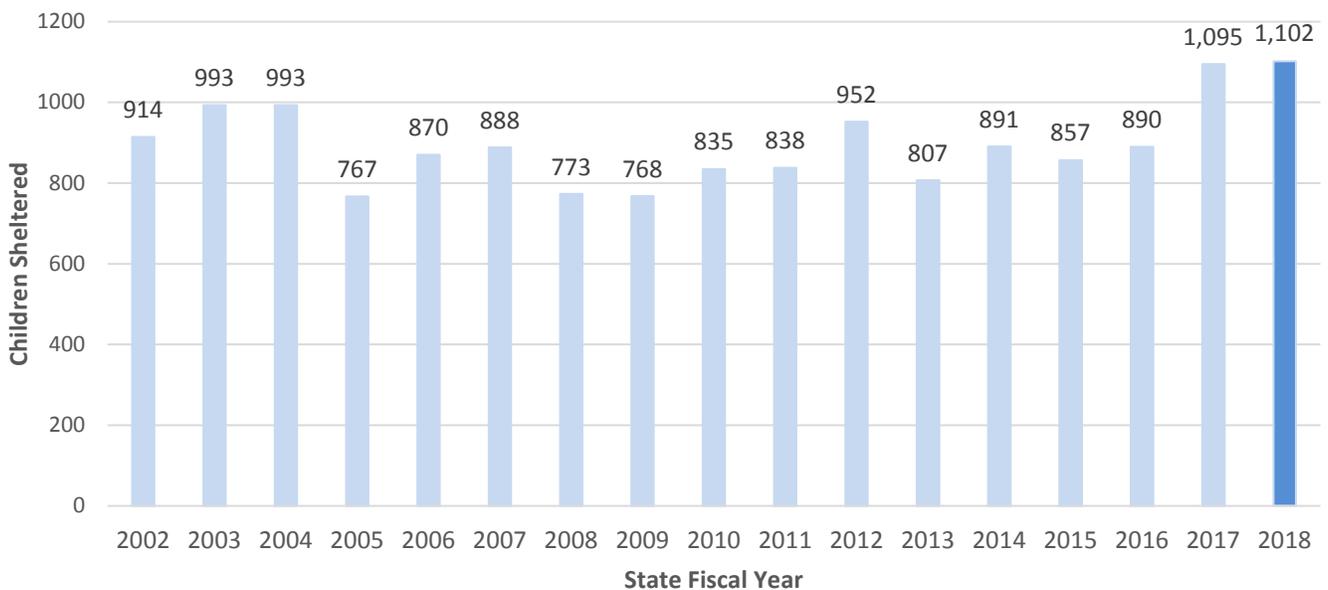
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<sup>3</sup> HUD definition of Chronic Homelessness: "To be considered chronically homeless, an individual or head of household must meet the definition of 'homeless individual with a disability' ... and have been living in a place not meant for human habitation, in an emergency shelter, or in a safe haven for the last 12 months continuously or on at least four occasions in the last three years where those occasions cumulatively total at least 12 months".

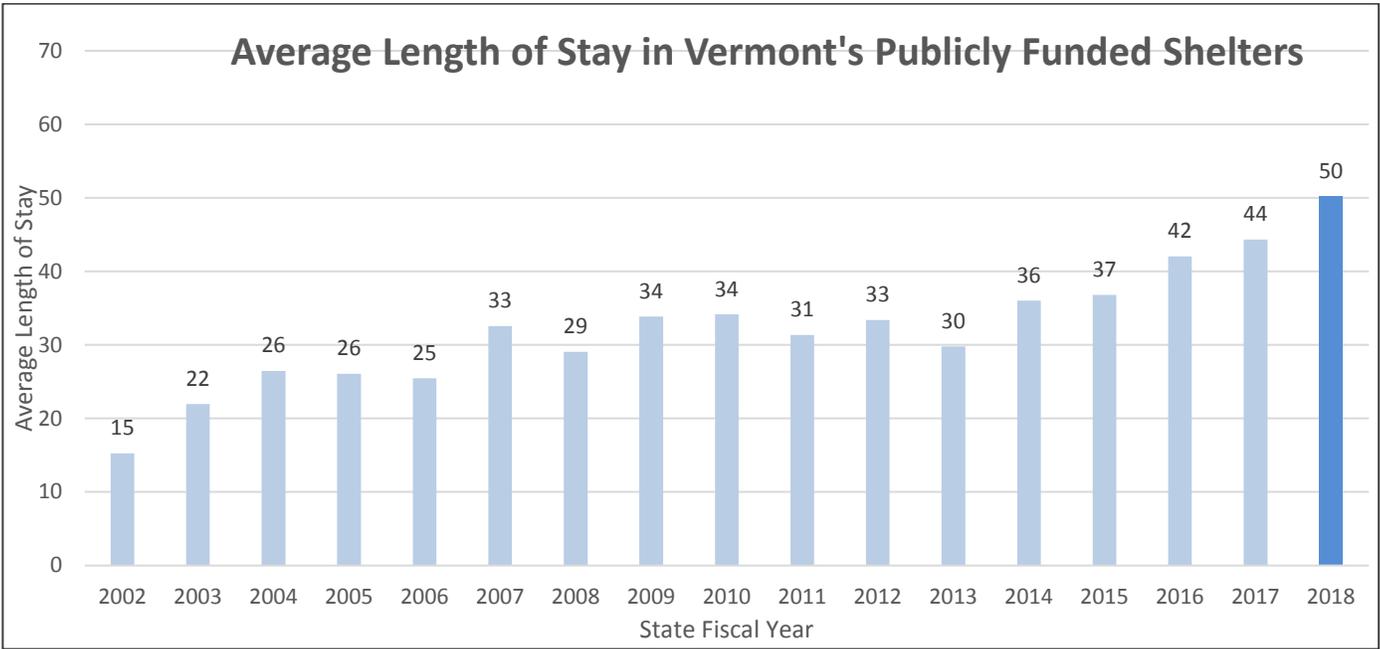
## Persons in Vermont's Publicly Funded Homeless Shelters



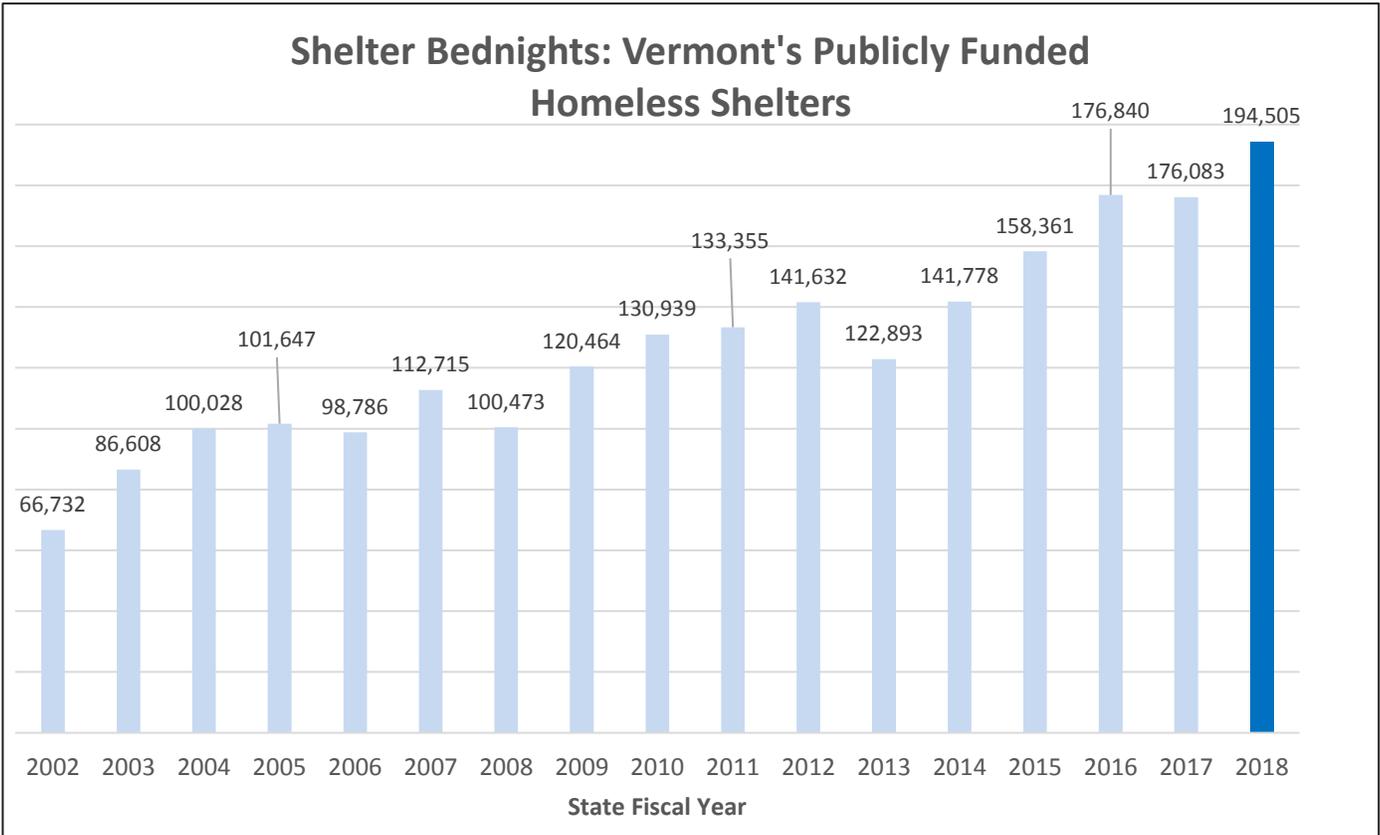
## Children in Vermont's Publicly Funded Homeless Shelters



While the number of persons in shelter decreased by 99 between 2017 and 2018, there was a significant increase over the past two years in the number of children in shelter, as a proportion of total shelter guests. Some of this increase is due to expanded capacity through emergency apartments in areas where no shelter capacity for families had previously existed. Anecdotally, we hear from providers that the trend since 2015 of seeing more children in shelter may relate to the rapid impact of opioid use by parents and the longer recovery period required.



HOP grantees report that longer shelter stays this year were the result of very low vacancy rates, limited access to affordable rental units, and a SFY 2018 freeze on rental subsidies.



Higher utilization of shelter bed and room capacity, in part due to longer shelter stays, resulted in an increase in total bednights provided.

## Housing Opportunity Grant Program Performance

Grantees report on measures tied to the category of funding received: Shelter Operations, Case Management, Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing. Performance targets and 2018 performance are included below. By reporting the “% of Grantees Meeting Target”, the Office of Economic Opportunity is able to better understand which areas the network may require training and support to improve or where targets may need to be reconsidered.

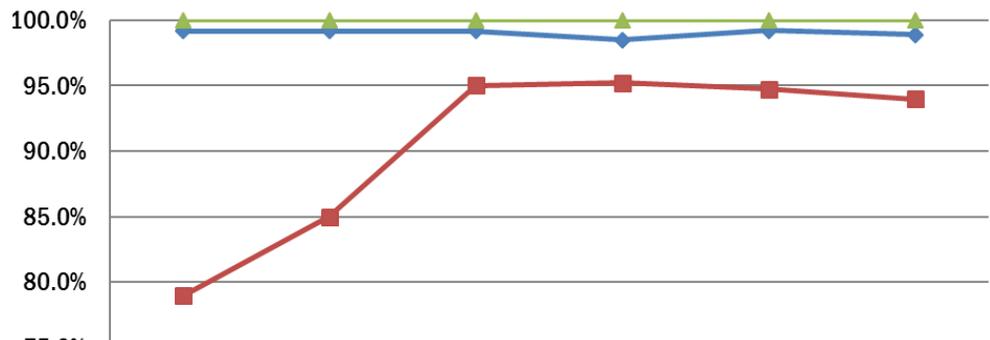
Performance Measures by Activity	Target	State FY 2018 Performance	% of Grantees Meeting Target
<b>EMERGENCY SHELTER OPERATIONS</b>			
Year-round Shelter facilities are open, staffed, insured, clear of safety violations, and available to shelter the homeless <sup>4</sup>	365 nights	Open 361 nights on average or 98.9%	94%
Warming/Seasonal shelter facilities are open, staffed, insured, clear of safety violations, and available to shelter the homeless	166 nights <sup>5</sup>	Open 157 nights on average or 95%	n/a
Shelter households (individuals or families) will have an initial meeting with a case manager (or equivalent) within 3 days of entering the program	90%	Emergency	87%
		Transitional	89%
		Youth	100%
Households who exit emergency shelter, exit to stable permanent or transitional housing	baseline	33%	n/a
<b>YOUTH SHELTER &amp; SERVICES</b>			
Youth exiting the program will have “safe exits” as defined by one of the following: college, friends, home with family, independent living, job corps, military, relative’s home, or residential treatment/rehab	70%	91%	100%
<b>CASE MANAGEMENT<sup>6</sup></b>			
Homeless households referred for case management will meet with a case manager within 3 days of the referral.	90%	82%	64%
Within 90 days of referral, households receiving case management will have at least 1 adult who is employed, OR enrolled in an educational or training program, OR has qualified for income benefits such as TANF, SSI or GA	70%	53%	36%
Within 90 days of referral, households receiving case management will be stabilized in transitional or permanent housing	70%	37%	19%
Households stabilized or re-housed will continue to be in stable housing at least 90 days following assistance	70%	69%	36%
<b>HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION</b>			
Households at-risk of homelessness will have their housing stabilized or be safely re-housed	70%	84%	73%
Households stabilized or re-housed will continue to be in stable housing at least 90 days following assistance	70%	58%	30%
<b>RAPID RE-HOUSING</b>			
Homeless households will be safely re-housed	70%	57%	70%
Households re-housed will continue to be in stable housing at least 90 days following assistance	70%	57%	38%

<sup>4</sup> Figures do not include day shelters, warming shelters, or transitional housing.

<sup>5</sup> 166 nights is November 1<sup>st</sup> – April 15<sup>th</sup>, cold weather months.

<sup>6</sup> Only organizations that receive HOP funding for case management report on these performance measures.

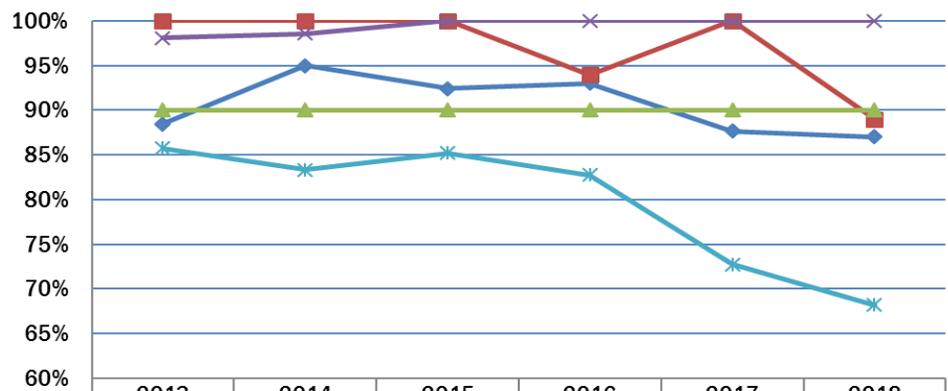
### Housing Opportunity Program Performance: Emergency Shelter Operations



	2013 Performance	2014 Performance	2015 Performance	2016 Performance	2017 Performance	2018 Performance
◆ % of calendar days that the shelter was open, staffed, insured, clear of safety violations and available to shelter residents	99.2%	99.2%	99.2%	98.5%	99.2%	98.9%
▲ Target	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
■ % of Grantees Meeting Target	79%	85%	95%	95%	95%	94%

Statewide, year-round emergency shelters were open and available to shelter the homeless for 98.9% of calendar days. Shelters occasionally need to close or reduce capacity for maintenance and repairs or to resolve potential public health issues. OEO works closely with grantees during these times to ensure guests have alternative accommodations, and to see shelters back at full capacity as soon as possible.

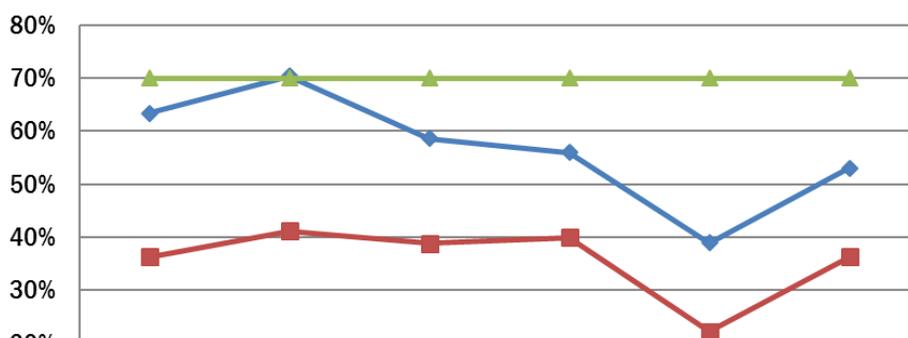
### Housing Opportunity Program Performance: Shelter Operations, Service Referral



	2013 Performance	2014 Performance	2015 Performance	2016 Performance	2017 Performance	2018 Performance
◆ Emergency Shelter: % of new HH who met with a case manager or advocate within 3 days of entrance	88%	95%	92%	93%	88%	87%
■ Transitional Housing: % of new HH who met with a case manager within 3 days of entrance	100%	100%	100%	94%	100%	89%
✕ Youth Shelter: % of youth who met with a case manager within 3 days of entrance	98%	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%
▲ Target	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%
* % of Emergency Shelter Grantees Meeting Target	86%	83%	85%	83%	73%	68%

Some emergency shelters provide services onsite, while other programs refer guests to another service provider for case management support. The Housing Opportunity Grant Program aims to ensure all shelter guests can meet with a case manager or advocate quickly after entry into a program (i.e., within 3 days). Quickly connecting to case management helps to meet the basic needs of all guests and connect guests to a permanent housing pathway. While most households were connected to a case manager within 3 days (87%), the percentage of grantees able to meet the target for this measure (i.e., 90% of households) decreased significantly in the past few years. This marked decrease in grantees meeting the target is attributed to an increase in seasonal warming shelters, which may struggle to (re-)establish connections with guests and service partners annually.

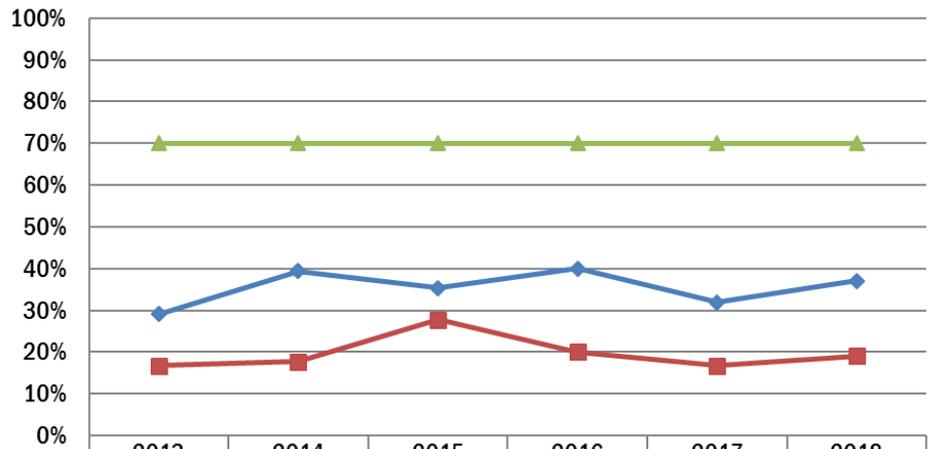
**Housing Opportunity Program Performance:  
Case Management for Homeless Households (HH), Income**



	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Performance	Performance	Performance	Performance	Performance	Performance	Performance
% of HH who - within 90 days of case management - have at least 1 adult who has found employment OR enrolled in education or training OR qualified for income benefits (e.g, TANF, SSI, GA)	63%	70%	59%	56%	39%	53%
Target	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%
% of Grantees Meeting Target	36%	41%	39%	40%	22%	36%

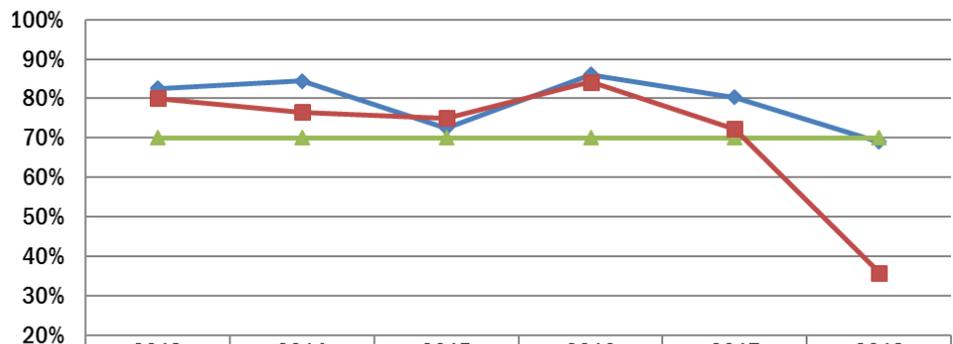
The percentage of households who found employment, enrolled in education/training, or increased their income due to benefits enrollment within 90 days of receiving case management saw an increase this year, but still remains below the program goal. Based on the program’s performance over time, it’s clear that the target (70% of households) to achieve within 90 days is aspirational, even if still important. OEO will focus additional training and technical assistance in the next few years on improving connections between homeless shelter/service providers with employment training and support resources, improved screening for employment and income through coordinated entry, and strengthening referrals to mainstream case management resources to leverage additional capacity.

### Housing Opportunity Program Performance: Case Management for Homeless Households (HH), Housing



	2013 Performance	2014 Performance	2015 Performance	2016 Performance	2017 Performance	2018 Performance
◆ % of households who, after meeting with a CM, were stabilized in transitional or permanent housing	29%	39%	35%	40%	32%	37%
▲ Target	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%
■ % of Grantees Meeting Target	17%	18%	28%	20%	17%	19%

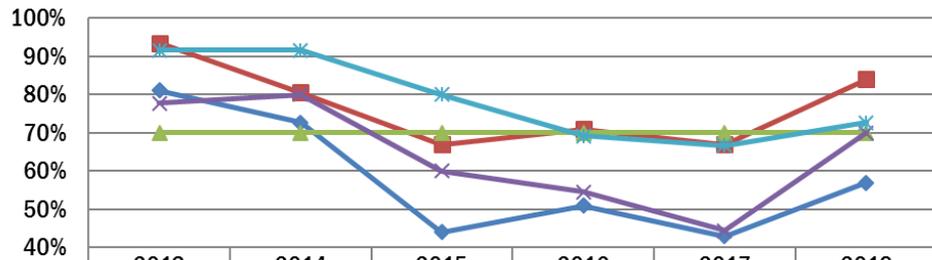
### Housing Opportunity Program Performance: Case Management for Homeless Households (HH), Housing Stability



	2013 Performance	2014 Performance	2015 Performance	2016 Performance	2017 Performance	2018 Performance
◆ % of households who were stabilized in transitional or permanent housing AND remained stably housed for at least 90 days (DV Excluded)	83%	84%	73%	86%	80%	69%
▲ Target	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%
■ % of Grantees Meeting Target	80%	76%	75%	84%	72%	36%

In 2018, 69% of households who were stabilized in housing continued to be stably housed for at least 90 days. Although there was a marked decrease in the percentage of grantees able to meet this target (70%), quite a few of these nearly met the target, but fell slightly short.

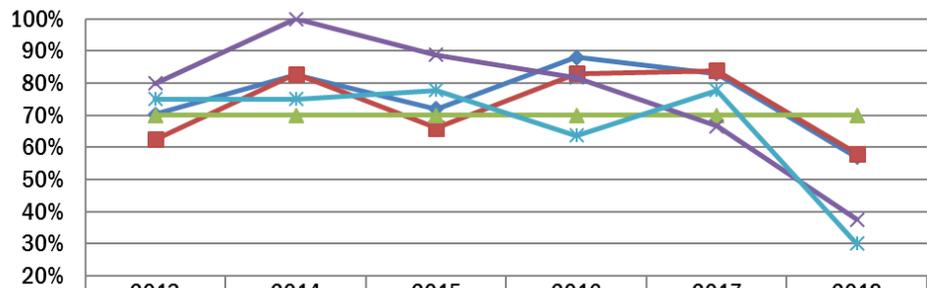
## Housing Opportunity Program Performance: Homelessness Prevention & Rapid Re-Housing



	2013 Performance	2014 Performance	2015 Performance	2016 Performance	2017 Performance	2018 Performance
◆ % of homeless households served who were re-housed.	81%	73%	44%	51%	43%	57%
■ % of households at-risk of homelessness who were stabilized or rehoused	93%	81%	67%	71%	67%	84%
▲ Target	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%
✕ % of Rapid Rehousing Grantees Meeting Target	78%	80%	60%	55%	44%	70%
* % of Homelessness Prevention Grantees Meeting Target	92%	92%	80%	69%	67%	73%

Between 2013 and 2017, OEO reported a steady decline in the percentage of households able to be stabilized in permanent housing within 28 days of program entry. Based on analysis and feedback from stakeholders, OEO adjusted reporting on this measure for 2018. While the target to stabilize at least 70% of households within 28 days remains an important aspirational benchmark, HOP grantees also report on the percentage of all households who attained stable housing regardless of the 28 day goal. In SFY 2018, HOP grantees reported that nearly 74% of total households served by Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing were stabilized in permanent housing. The average length of time in the program prior to stabilization was 30 days. HOP grantees report limited access to affordable rental units and a temporary freeze on rental subsidies as major barriers to more quickly stabilizing households who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness. HOP investments in landlord liaison positions focus on outreach and retention of landlords has proven a promising approach.

## Housing Opportunity Program Performance: Homelessness Prevention & Rapid Re-Housing - Housing Stability



	2013 Performance	2014 Performance	2015 Performance	2016 Performance	2017 Performance	2018 Performance
◆ % of homeless HH who remain in stable housing 90 days after assistance (rapid re-housing)	70%	83%	72%	88%	83%	57%
■ % of HH at-risk of homelessness who remain in stable housing 90 days after assistance (prevention)	63%	83%	66%	83%	84%	58%
▲ Target	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%	70%
✕ % of Rapid Re-Housing Grantees Meeting Target	80%	100%	89%	82%	67%	38%
✧ % of Homelessness Prevention Grantees Meeting Target	75%	75%	78%	64%	78%	30%

Housing stability outcomes for Rapid Re-Housing and Homelessness Prevention programs saw a sharp decline this year for reasons to be explored. The percentage of households remaining stable 90 days after receiving assistance plummeted from 87% to 57% for Rapid Re-Housing, and from 84% to 57% for Prevention, each falling below the target of 70%. In both cases, just 30-38% of grantees were able to meet the performance target.

Due to limited funding, many communities may be limiting Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing financial or rental assistance to one-time or one-month of support. Full implementation of Coordinated Entry should help to identify whether households are adequately being matched with the right level of assistance. Additional training and support on best practices for post-lease support services may also boost housing stability outcomes.

While it is difficult to draw broad conclusions about the efficacy of all homeless assistance programs from these performance measures, it is clear that some strategies are successful. Access to case management and supportive services is critical for households experiencing homelessness; however, financial assistance and services together through rapid re-housing demonstrates an effective combination of resources to help families achieve and maintain housing stability.