

# Vermont Ending Family Homelessness

## Quarterly Update | January 2016

### Vermont's Three-Part Strategy for Ending Family Homelessness

**A**dopt the national “*Family Connection*” framework to ensure local communities have a coordinated system for assessing families’ housing needs and connecting them to the appropriate housing, benefits, employment supports, and evidence-based intervention the first time.

**B**raid supportive services, housing, and rental assistance to improve stability for families, children, landlords and communities.

**C**onstruct and rehabilitate rental housing which is affordable to households with extremely low incomes, and accessible to families and individuals who have experienced homelessness.

### Recent Updates

#### The Governor's 15% Housing Goal

On January 21st, Governor Peter Shumlin – in support of Vermont’s goal of ending child and family homelessness by 2020 – directed his administration to ensure that 15% of taxpayer-funded housing in Vermont be dedicated to house Vermonters who are homeless.

#### Targeting Federal Subsidies for Supportive Housing

Since the Vermont State Housing Authority’s Supportive Housing preference went into effect in October, nine rental vouchers have been issued to homeless families with intensive case management. On December 1<sup>st</sup>, the first of these formerly homeless families moved into affordable housing.

#### Developing Community Alternatives to Motels

During November and December, community-based emergency shelters opened in St. Johnsbury, Barre and Burlington as an alternative to motels. An additional site will open in Newport February 1. The Department for Children and Families will be supporting 16 additional rooms to provide emergency housing for families with children through master-leased apartments with services.

#### Implementing the Family Connection Framework

In December, Vermont’s Homeless Continuum of Care groups began self-assessments to identify gaps, prioritize training needs, and gauge their progress in implementing the *Family Connection* framework.

#### Collaborative Training Opportunities

In January, Vermont’s State Office of Economic Opportunity and Agency of Education hosted “*Supporting Kids Together*,” a joint training for homeless service providers and Pre-k to grade 12 school partners in the homeless Continuum of Care.



Additional Information on Vermont’s Goal and Strategies for Ending Family Homelessness Available at:

[humanservices.vermont.gov/end-family-homelessness](http://humanservices.vermont.gov/end-family-homelessness)

## Personal Narrative - Connecting to Housing and Employment through Head Start

Christina and Eric were staying in a motel on the outskirts of town with their three year old daughter. The family did not have access to transportation, and neither parent was working. Most of the family's income from state assistance and social security went to pay for the small hotel room with only a microwave and cooktop. Most days were spent in the dark hotel room with occasional trips to the grocery store – five miles away – dependent on the good graces of friends or family members.

During their first home visit from Bennington County Head Start, the family established two goals: to obtain affordable housing and secure employment for Eric. Eric's Family Worker brought a laptop to the

hotel and helped him develop his résumé. Referrals were made to the local Housing Review Team and Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council where the family was connected with a housing specialist. Within six weeks, the family had moved into a bright two-bedroom apartment in town, within walking distance of employers, grocery stores, doctor's offices and social services.

A year later, this family continues to maintain stable housing and the couple has since married. Eric is working full-time at a local factory and expects to have his driver's license within the next month. The sense of pride and hope that this family exemplifies continues to inspire those around them.

## Other Highlights and Milestones from 2015

**State Rental Subsidies** - In 2015, approximately 190 formerly homeless households (248 adults and 297 children) moved into affordable housing with a *Vermont Rental Subsidy* from the Department for Children and Families. Among families who exited the program during the year, 87% successfully transitioned to a federal subsidy or increased income and did not require subsidy.

**Supportive Services** – In 2015, 91 families (121 adults and their 176 children) who had struggled with homelessness and other challenges were stabilized in affordable housing and receiving intensive on-site services and supports through one of Vermont's five Family Supportive Housing demonstration pilots. 86% of these families remained stably housed at year-end.



### Decline in Child Homelessness

In 2015, Vermont recorded a small but welcome reduction in the number of people experiencing homelessness. While only a modest 2% change across all ages, the count found a more statistically-significant 17% reduction in the number of Vermont kids who were experiencing homelessness.