

Central Vermont Family Shelter Impact Report

Celebrating Success Amid Vermont's Housing Crisis

The housing crisis effects all Vermonters at all social and economic levels, but our vulnerable populations, especially children, are impacted most critically. In central Vermont the housing crisis has been exasperated by extreme weather events, resulting in intense storms and floods that have reduced the already limited number of available homes. In this report we reflect on a successful pilot aimed at providing emergency housing and wraparound social services to improve the lives of our community members.

Health-Related Social Needs

THRIVE is the Accountable Community for Health (ACH) collaborative for the Barre health service area. THRIVE's aim is to **address health-related social needs** by convening healthcare, public health, social services, and other local partners. The multi-sector partnership works to improve health outcomes and contain costs by identifying and addressing social determinants of health. In that capacity, **THRIVE composed this impact report to document the interagency collaboration efforts needed to produce successful outcomes for the family shelter pilot.**

In the fall of 2024 the State of Vermont's Agency of Human Services (AHS) stood up a family shelter in central Vermont. By bringing together state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community partners, the shelter provided a holistic, personalized, and coordinated approach instead of addressing issues in isolation. The Central Vermont Family Shelter has demonstrated **significant success addressing homelessness and improving family stability** through inter agency collaboration. This integration has not only **improved outcomes for residents** but also **optimized resources** for service providers and taxpayers by reducing redundancies and increasing efficiency. By documenting these learnings our intent is to amplifying the positive impact.



Location: Waterbury
Emergency Opening: November 2024
Occupancy: 26 (average)

Family Shelter Outcomes:

Recorded November 2024-March 2025 (4 months)

- Each family is connected to case managers and entered into the permanent housing application system (Coordinated Entry).
- All children are enrolled in school with access to support services.
- Families are living in a safer environment compared to the hotel-based model.
- Families previously living in unsafe conditions (one example, living in a car) found stability.
- One family transitioned to permanent housing.
- One family relocated out of state to secure housing.

What Did We Learn?

Key Successes

You might not think that placing families in a temporary shelter would result in the development of skills needed for stable housing— but it did— in rapid time. Communal shelter living requires effective communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and shared responsibilities such as managing kitchen and storage spaces. In central Vermont we are fortunate to have skilled social service agencies who came on-site to the shelter to facilitate collaborative culture development. This approach allowed families to focus on long-term housing goals in a secure place to live including parenting mentorship, cooking classes and life skill support groups. The result was a sense of community among residents. **The skills residents learned at the shelter are cornerstones of housing stability and will be carried forward in any future housing situation.** Additionally, **engaging community ambassadors** was a key success. In particular, one ambassador participated in community discussions including on Front Porch Forum. This role was pivotal to the community engaging and ultimately changing from opposition to embracing shelter residents, making generous donations, sponsoring gifts and delivering pies during the holidays.

Challenges & Lessons Learned

Finding a physical location for a shelter is challenging. There was significant **concern for public safety**, resistance to housing families from out of town, and opposition from the municipality. Shelter operators established a cohort with safety standards in place by implementing thorough screenings and criminal background checks. Another challenge during implementation was service coordination between state agencies and nonprofit organizations. **Initially, service delivery lacked streamlined communication, leading to inefficiencies and service gaps.** Through enhanced collaboration and communication, these issues were resolved, ensuring families received the support they needed in a timely and effective manner. Service providers gained efficiencies with reduced travel and appointment no-shows.

Carrying Forward Best Practices

- Address public safety concerns by implementing vetted protocols.
- Clear communication protocols between shelter operator and agencies.
- House families together— families have similar, unique needs.
- Establish a collaborative culture among residents.
- Engage community leaders to serve as ambassadors.
- Develop school partnerships— service coordination and weekend meals.

Looking to the Future

State-led Family Shelter operations were slated to end in April, recently extended through June. Area service providers are exploring which agency could operate a family shelter. Downstreet Housing (scheduled to open family housing) and Good Samaritan, the adult shelter could benefit from the essential **interagency partnerships that proved to be critical in the success of the family shelter.**

Agencies Supporting the Shelter

- Family Center of Washington County
- Capstone Community Action
- Vermont Department of Health
- Vermont Economic Services
- Department of Labor



Health Related Social Needs

- Housing
- Food
- Employment
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Finance
- Safety
- Language
- Family & Community Support



Washington County Shelter & Affordable Housing Organizations

- Another Way
- Capstone
- Circle
- Downstreet
- Elevate (youth)
- Good Samaritan (adult)