
Report to
The Vermont Legislature

GENERAL ASSISTANCE; EMERGENCY HOUSING REPORTS

In Accordance with Act 50, Sec E.321.2,

An act relating to making appropriations for the support of government.

Submitted to: Joint Fiscal Committee

Submitted by: Douglas A. Racine, Secretary, AHS

Prepared by: Chris Dalley, Economic Services Division

Report Date: July 15, 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
Introduction	3
General Assistance Housing Program Management	3
New Program Resources	4
Data Collection Processes	5
Health and Safety Assurances	5
Program Rules	5
Cold Weather Exception	6
Appendix	7 - 12
A. Vulnerable Populations Eligibility Criteria	
B. Aggregate GA Housing Data (January – June 2014)	
C. GA Housing Denial Data (January – June 2014)	
D. GA Housing Data Tables (Statewide: January – June 2014)	
E. Primary Stated Cause of Homelessness (January – June 2014)	
F. GA Emergency Housing (2008-2014 Overview)	

Introduction:

Act 50 required the Department for Children and Families (DCF) in the Agency of Human Services (AHS) to develop:

- (1) An intake system for individuals and families receiving emergency housing services including collection of basic statistical information about the clients served;
- (2) A system to track payments to motels; and
- (3) A system for ensuring the safety and health of clients who are housed in motels.

The act also required new General Assistance housing reports to be submitted to the legislature in January and July of each year with data specific to these key program areas:

- demographic information,
- de-identified client data,
- shelter and motel usage rates,
- clients' primary stated cause of homelessness, and
- the average lengths of stay in emergency housing by demographic group and by type of housing, and such other relevant data as the Secretary deems appropriate.

Below, and included in the appendices, are data and information related to these statutory mandates.

I. General Assistance Housing Program Management

The intake and eligibility determination for General Assistance emergency housing is determined in each of the Economic Services Division's (ESD) twelve district offices.

Vermonters seeking emergency housing apply at the local ESD office where they are seen for an intake interview and eligibility determination the same day. Emergency housing applicants are seen on a first come, first serve basis. Vermont 2-1-1 handles after-hour and weekend calls. Applicants seeking emergency housing after hours or on weekends are provisionally housed by Vermont 2-1-1 if they meet basic eligibility criteria, and are required to go to an ESD office to receive subsequent emergency housing authorization. Those who fail to appear in the ESD office are denied additional housing until they comply with this program requirement.

Local ESD offices communicate daily with 2-1-1 and local homeless shelters. Each morning, ESD staff contact local shelters to learn the number of available beds for that night. This information is shared at the end of each day with 2-1-1 so that they know which shelters have available beds. This system is working well and assures that shelters, where they exist, remain the first resource for homeless families and individuals needing emergency shelter.

II. Program Resources

- a. **Harbor Place:** ESD and the Agency of Human Services Director of Housing worked over the summer and fall of 2013 to build greater shelter capacity throughout the state, especially in Chittenden County which is the primary driver of the GA emergency housing budget. On November 1, 2013, the Harbor Place (HP) transitional program began sheltering and serving its first families. The facility was opened under the management of Champlain Housing Trust with significant financial investments from DCF. These funds supported the renovation of the facility from its former use as a motel and secured access to 30 rooms at a cost of \$38 per room. This arrangement guarantees ESD a minimum number of beds in Chittenden County at about 40% savings compared to motel costs. Additionally, community partners such as Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO), Women Helping Battered Women (WHBW) and Safe Harbor have committed case management and other resources to help residents identify and address underlying needs and barriers to securing housing. There are bi-weekly check-in calls with community partners, 2-1-1, CHT, Harbor Place and DCF Economic Services Division.

Harbor Place has now been in operation for eight months. In addition to the 30 contracted rooms, Harbor Place has 20 rooms potentially available at an average cost of \$38 per night. This is compared to the Burlington area motel average cost of \$55 per night. The following data reflect the average number of beds used per night for the contracted rooms:

During the Cold Weather Exception (CWE) months of November through March, 100% of the 30 rooms were used on average each night for a total average cost of \$1,140 per night. During the months of April, May and June, 78% (23 rooms) of the 30 rooms were used on average each night at an average cost of \$874 per night.

- b. **Warming Shelters:** Several communities are setting up local warming shelters for homeless individuals to have a warm and safe place to sleep with AHS and DCF support. Communities which added warming shelter capacity in the past 12 months include Middlebury and North Springfield.

These new resources provide alternatives to motels, help reduce costs, and offer enhanced services to homeless families and individuals. Prioritization of emergency housing referrals for persons experiencing homelessness in Chittenden County is currently:

1. Shelter
2. Harbor Place
3. Motel

In other regions of the state, family, individual and warming shelters continue to play a significant role in providing bed capacity and options within the local homeless Continuum of Care.

III. Data Collection Processes

The 12 ESD district offices collect the following data daily and submit a weekly spreadsheet to ESD central office for a monthly and year-to-date statewide compilation:

- Total number of emergency housing requests
- Emergency housing requests granted/denied
- Number of singles granted/denied housing
- Number of families granted/denied housing
- Number of adults and children in households requesting and granted housing
- Number of eligible catastrophic requests/number granted
- Number of categorically-eligible vulnerable population requests/number granted
- Number of eligible vulnerable points requests/number granted
- Total number of nights authorized/average cost per night/total cost for authorized nights
- Number of Cold Weather Exception grants/number of adults granted under CWE/number of children granted under CWE
- Number of Cold Weather Exception nights authorized/average cost per night/total cost for CWE nights authorized

The above data are collected manually in the district and central offices as DCF's ACCESS system is not designed to collect this data. Payments for emergency housing are made based on motel billings on ESD authorization forms. Once billing is received from a motel by ESD, the local district office authorizes payment through the ACCESS system which generates payment to the motel. The Department for Children & Families Business Office generates a monthly report that reflects all payments made for emergency housing.

IV. Health and Safety Assurances

ESD sought the assistance of the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) regarding health and safety standards for those motels ESD uses for emergency housing. VDH conducts routine sanitation inspections at licensed lodging establishments. As VDH is scheduled to do yearly inspections, ESD will request inspection reports for motels in December of each year.

V. Program Rules

Expedited vulnerable population rules for emergency housing were put into effect August 1, 2013. These are within this report as *Appendix A*. A summary of emergency housing requests, including catastrophic and vulnerable populations, for the period of January to June 2014 follows:

- 9,503 emergency housing applications were received, of these:
 - 6,932 were granted; 2,571 were denied.
 - 5,222 singles were granted; 1,909 singles were denied.
 - 1,710 families were granted; 662 families were denied.

- Of the 10,546 adults in households requesting emergency housing, 7,649 were granted.
- Of the 4,030 children in households requesting emergency housing, 2,882 were granted.
- 1,479 were found eligible under the catastrophic criteria; 1,185 were granted.
- 1,220 were found categorically-eligible under the vulnerable population categories; 646 were granted.
- 20 were found eligible under vulnerable points (see eligibility criteria); 19 were granted.
- 14,752 bed nights were paid for at an average cost of \$60/night.

VI. Cold Weather Exception

The following data reflects the Cold Weather Exception (CWE) nights for January – June 2014. There were 30 CWE nights in January, 28 CWE nights in February, 31 CWE nights in March and 10 CWE nights in April resulting in a total of 99 CWE nights through the remainder of the CWE season ending April 30th, 2014.

CWE nights in 2014 are slightly higher at 99 nights than the same period in 2013 (96 nights). From January 1st through the end of April 2014, DCF spent an estimated \$783,017 on cold weather exceptions. This figure represents 13,204 nights at an average cost of \$59/night.

APPENDIX A: Vulnerable Populations Eligibility Criteria

2652.3 Emergency Housing for Vulnerable Populations

Emergency housing is intended to provide up to 28 days of shelter for vulnerable populations who are without housing and do not qualify for temporary housing under rule 2652.2. Applicants shall qualify for emergency housing if all other eligibility criteria are met and the household has a member who is:

- A. 65 years of age or older;
- B. in receipt of SSI or SSDI;
- C. a child six years of age or younger; or
- D. in the third trimester of pregnancy.

Applicant households, without a member belonging to one of the above vulnerable populations, shall qualify for emergency housing if all other eligibility criteria are met and the household has a member belonging to one or more of the vulnerable populations listed below and has been assessed a total of 4 or more points according to the following point system:

Vulnerable Population Category	Points
Disabled Veteran (as defined in 38 U.S.C. § 4211)	1
Individual with an open case receiving services from the Family Services Division	1
SSI or SSDI applicant with medical documentation of disability	1
Child(ren) between the ages of 7 and 17	2
Individual discharged from a 48 hours or more inpatient hospital stay, within the past 30 days, who has an ongoing medical need related to the hospitalization	2
Individual over 18 years of age discharged from the custody of the Department for Children and Families within the past 3 years	1
Reach Up recipient	1
Individual on probation or parole with the Department of Corrections who has been incarcerated for 12 consecutive months and released within the past 6 months	1

Applicant households shall be assigned points only once within any vulnerable population category.

APPENDIX B: Aggregate GA Housing (January – June 2014)

5,000 foot view **			2,000 foot view of just housing						
Total # housing only requests	# of housing only requests granted	# of housing only requests denied	# singles GRANTED housing	# singles denied housing	# families GRANTED housing	# families denied housing	# of adults GRANTED	# of children GRANTED	Catastrophic GRANTED
9,503	6,932	2,571	5,222	1,909	1,710	662	7,649	2,882	1,185
Auto. Vulnerable GRANTED	Points Vulnerable GRANTED	# of Total Nights Paid For	Average cost per night	Average Total Costs	CWE	#adults	#children	# nights	
646	19	14,752	\$60	\$892,422	5,079	5,479	1,332	13,204	

Potential Denial Reasons

Used Max days 28/84

No Verification provided

Not meeting with worker/ CM

Not spending 30% towards meeting housing need

Didn't follow up with Housing provider

***4 Auto criteria

65 Years of age or older

In receipt of SSI/SSDI

A child 6 years of age or under

In 3rd Trimester of pregnancy

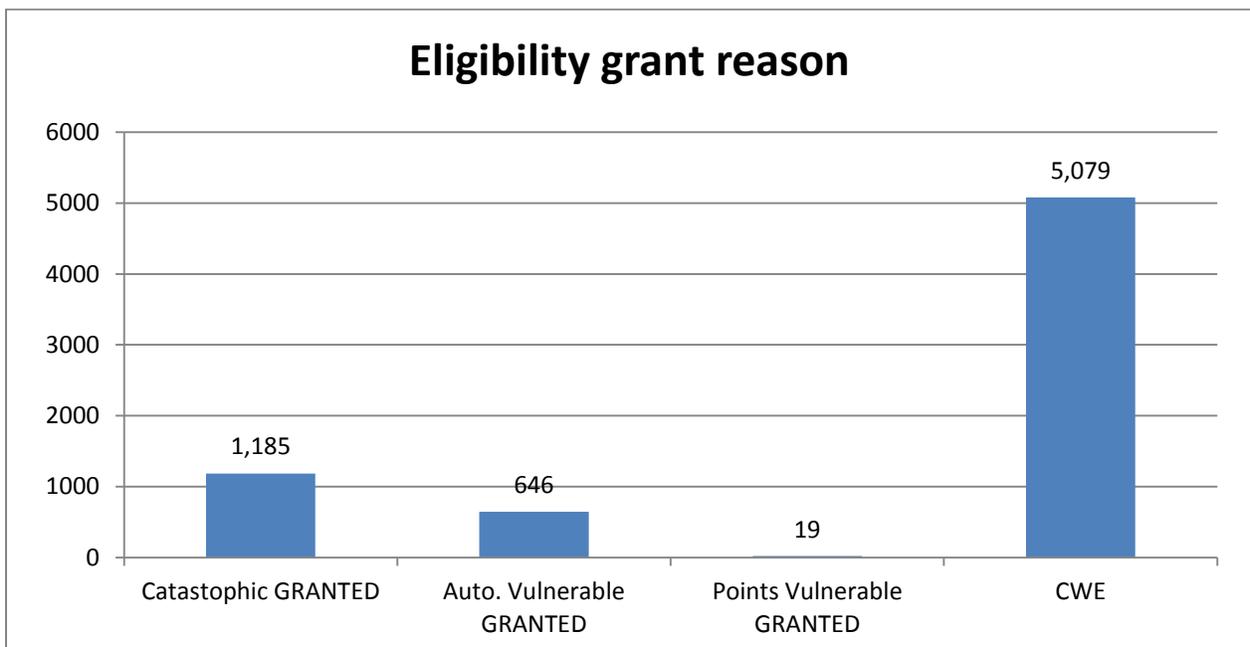
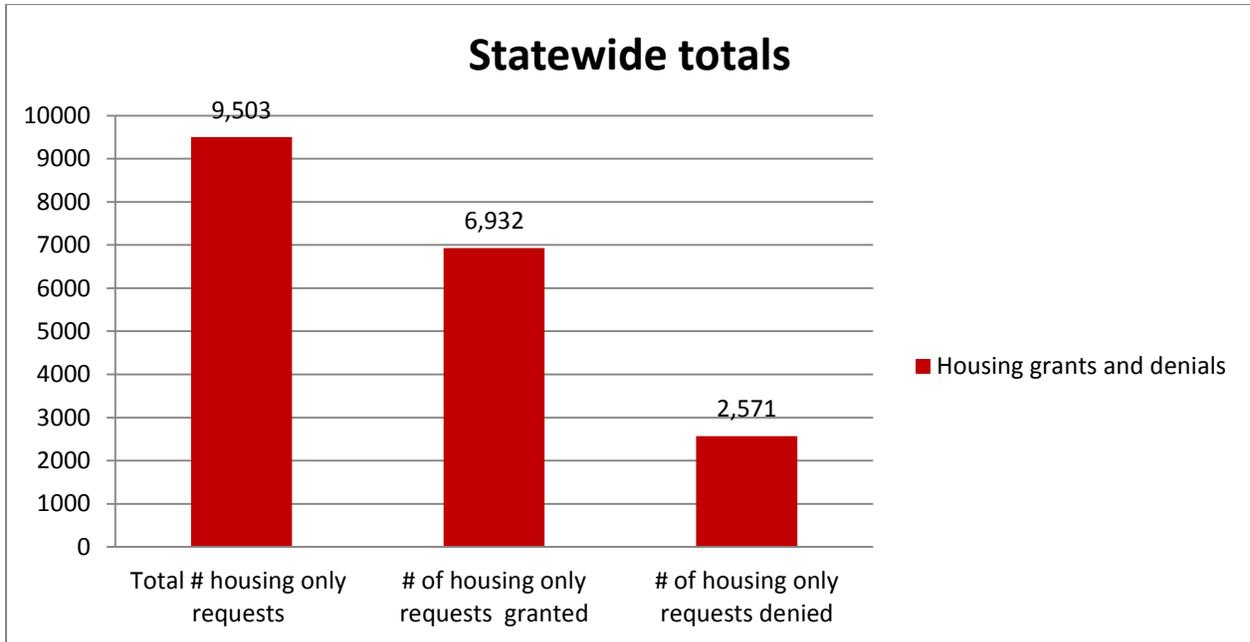
****4 Points or more

APPENDIX C: GA Housing Denial Data (January – June 2014)

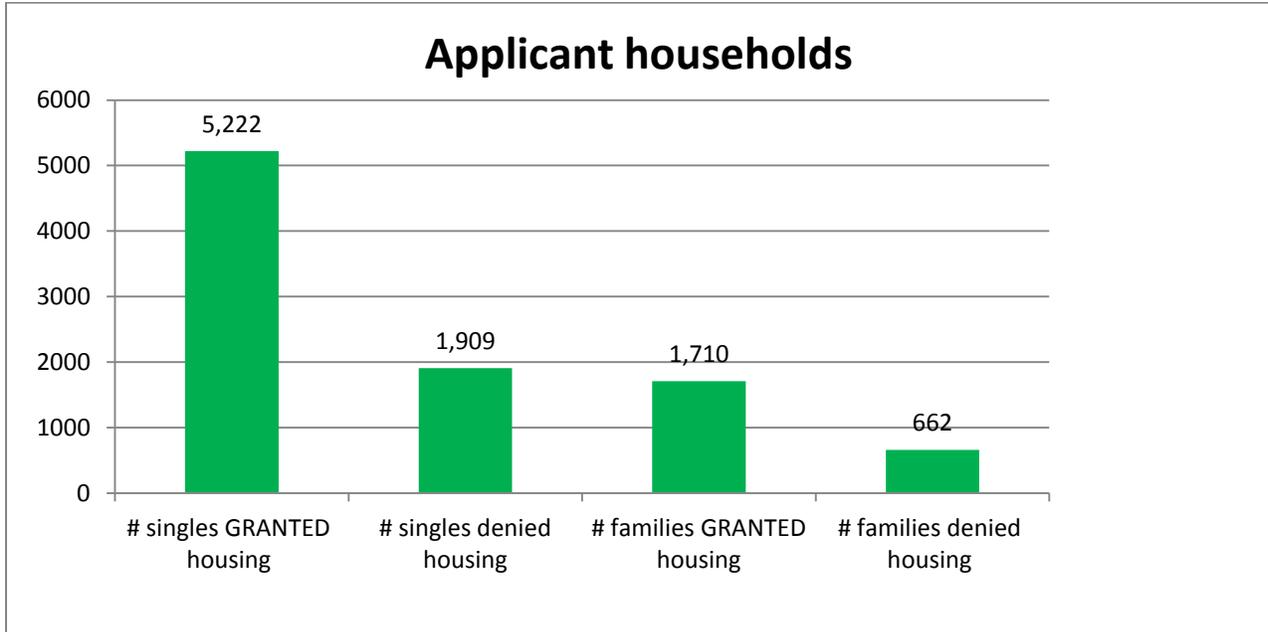
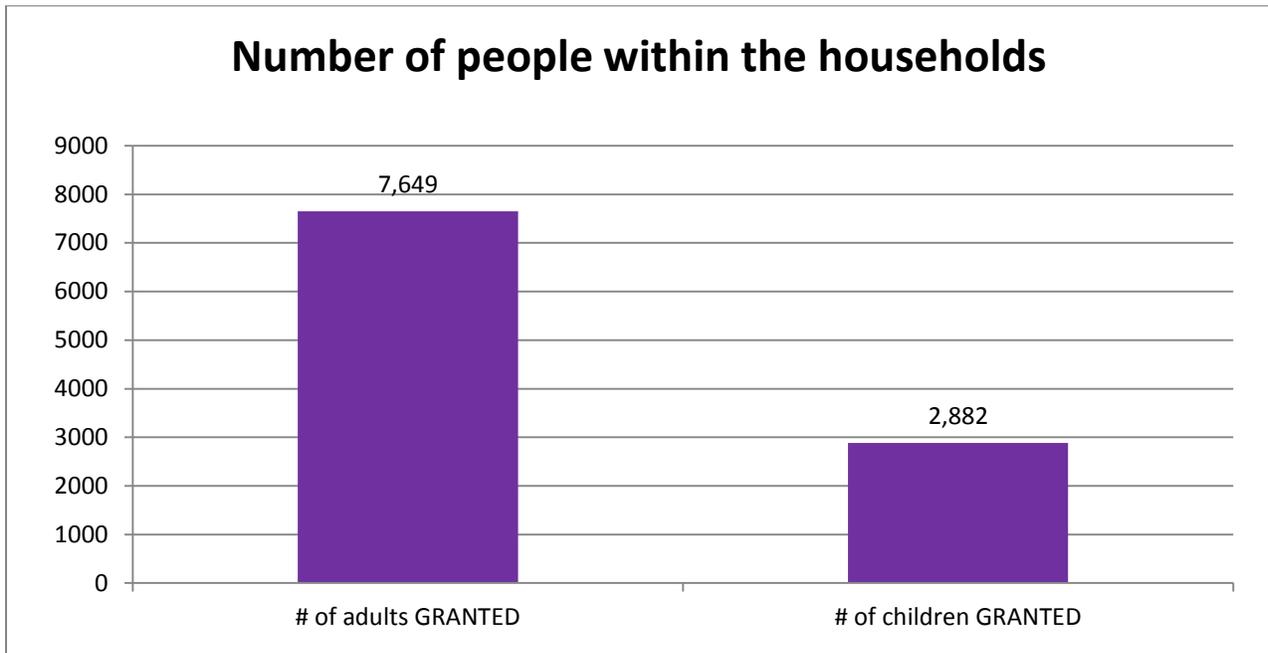
January 2014 - June 2014 YTD GA/EA Denials							
Total Denied Applications							
2539							
Adults ONLY households			Households with Child(ren)				
		1886	74%				
				653	26%		
Top 5 Denial Reasons			Top 5 Denial Reasons				
1	No Category	663	35%	1	Other Housing Options	172	26%
2	Other Housing Options	282	15%	2	No Category	138	21%
3	Shelter Space Available	258	14%	3	Available Resources	92	14%
4	Verification Needed	182	10%	4	Caused Own Eviction/Homelessness	90	14%
5	Caused Own Eviction/Homelessness	123	7%	5	Verification Needed	87	13%

APPENDIX D: GA Housing Data Tables (Statewide: January – June 2014)

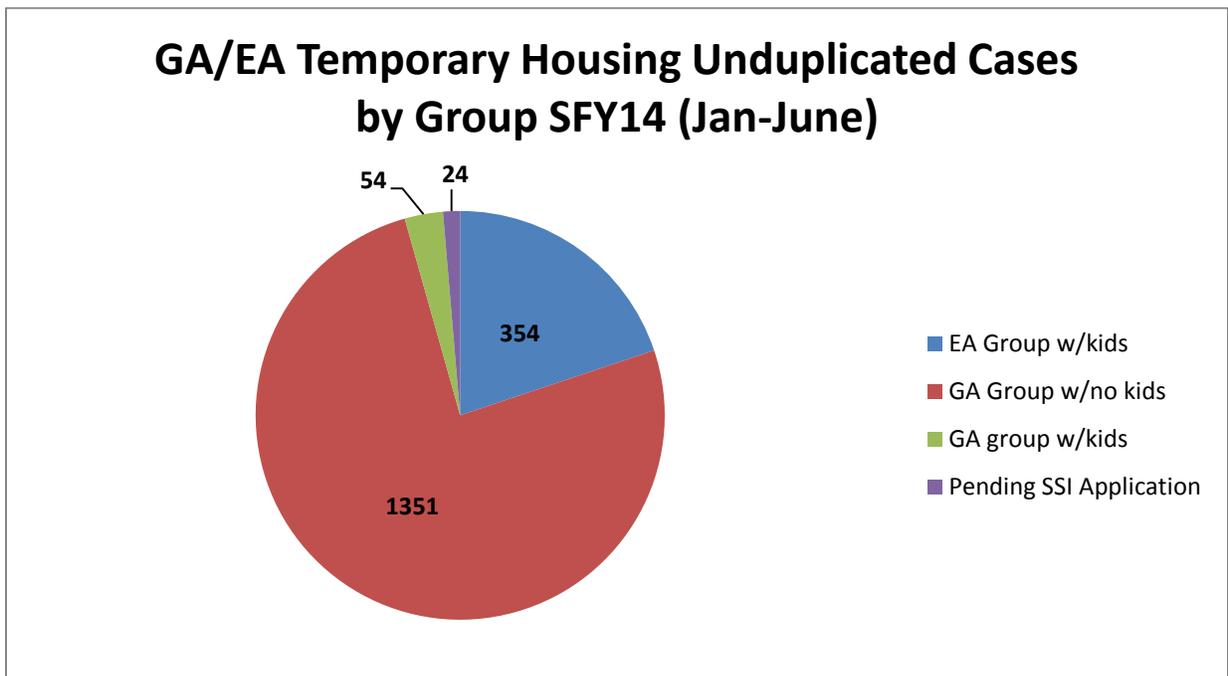
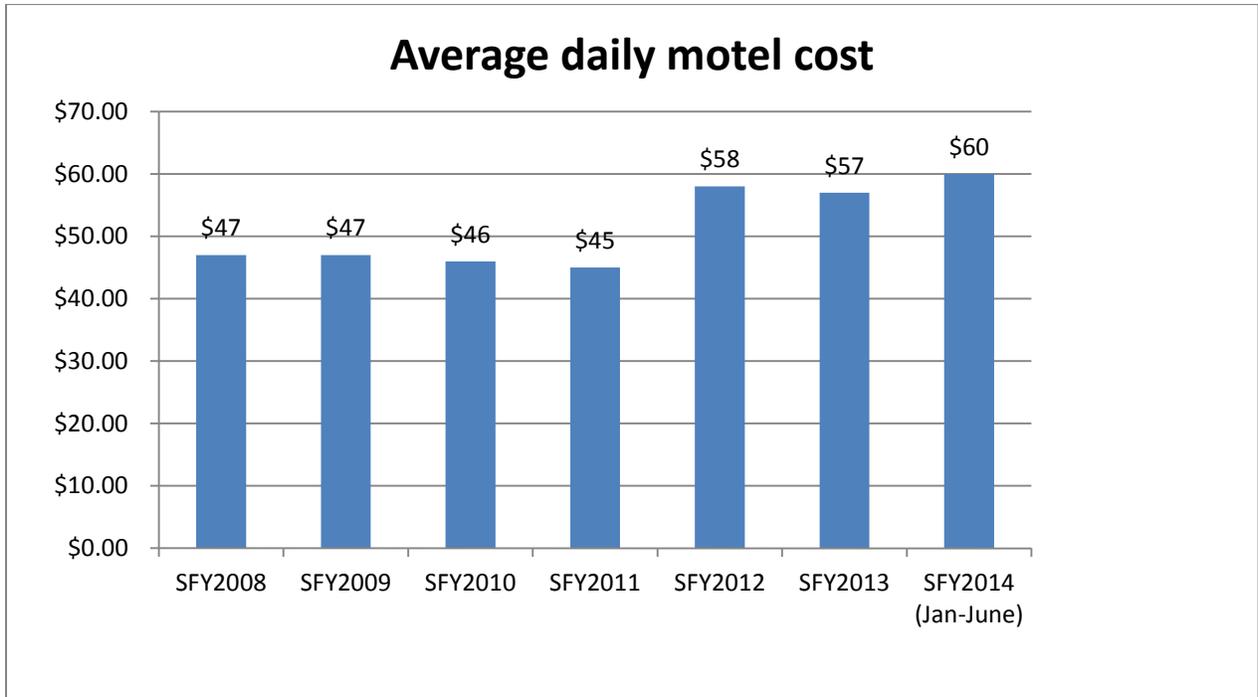
Statewide temporary housing data for January – June 2014



Statewide temporary housing data for January – June 2014



Statewide temporary housing data for January – June 2014



APPENDIX E: Primary Stated Cause of Homelessness

Primary State Cause of Homelessness	St. Albans	Burlington	Rutland	Middlebury	Barre	Morrisville	Bennington	Brattleboro	Newport	St. Johnsbury	Springfield	Hartford	Statewide	Combined Districts ranking across state in each category of Homelessness
Job Loss/Unemployment/Underemployment											4	3		2
Unexpected Expenses (Including car repair)														0
Could not afford housing	4	5	4	4	5	5					2		4	7
Eviction with cause	3		3	4		2	3	2	5	4	5	5	2	10
Eviction without cause/Non-renewal		4	2		3	3		4	4	3	3		3	8
Domestic Violence/Child Abuse	5	2	1	1	2	4	2	3	3	2		2	1	11
Household conflict or change in size	2	3	2	2	4	1	5		2		1	1	2	10
Overcrowded/Under-housed			5	5			4	5		5			5	5
Natural Disaster														0
Constructive Eviction														0
Other	1	1	5	3	1	2	1	1	1	1		4	1	11
<u>Quick Look</u>														
* 50% of the District Offices say that DV is the top stated reason for Homelessness														
STATEWIDE - Top Four Stated Causes of Homelessness for persons applying for GA Temporary Housing														
Domestic Violence/Child Abuse	1													
Other	2													
Household conflict or change in size	3													
Eviction with cause	4													

APPENDIX F: GA Emergency Housing (2008-2014 Overview)

	Unique cases	Total Days	Ave Days	Ave.cost per night
SFY2008	548	10,468	19	\$47
SFY2009	1,140	25,516	22	\$47
SFY2010	1,740	23,564	14	\$46
SFY2011	1,448	31,934	22	\$45
SFY2012	1,954	38,350	20	\$58
SFY2013	2,851	71,770	25	\$57
SFY2014 (Jan-June)	1,783	28,383	16	\$60