

Organization:	Pathways Vermont, Inc.
Point of Contact:	Lindsay Mesa, Assistant Director, lindsay@pathwaysvermont.org , 802-598-7775
Key Partners:	Department of Mental Health, Department of Corrections, United Way of Northwestern Vermont, Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness, Designated Agencies, Chittenden County Homeless Alliance, Vermont State Housing Authority, Burlington Housing Authority, Brattleboro Housing Partnership, Champlain Housing Authority, 150 plus local landlords.
Geographic area to serve (AHS District, Geographic Area, or Towns):	Varies based on 3 proposal options outlined below
Areas of Interest (#1-6):	#5 and #7

In 2020, the world faced an unprecedented crisis. In Vermont, leaders and community members met that crisis with opportunity and committed to supporting the health and safety of all our communities members - quickly mobilizing creative non-congregate solutions to emergency housing and, as a result, avoiding both a greater public health crisis as well as actualizing the lowest rate of unsheltered homelessness in the country¹.

We are proud to be part of a community that so deeply cares for each other. Now, we are faced with our next crisis - and we ask again that the state consider how to see this crisis as an opportunity. Can we invest in permanent solutions? Can we envision a state where everyone finds a home? What resources do we need to stand up? Pathways believes with an investment in Housing First permanent supported housing, Vermont can take a significant step in ending homelessness in our state.

In FY2022, Pathways housed 166 households. We can do more.

¹ <https://vtdigger.org/2023/02/07/vermonts-rates-of-homelessness-are-almost-the-worst-in-the-country/>

Proposal Description

To help support the households exiting the GA Emergency Housing Program and to address concerns regarding an increase in unsheltered homelessness, Pathways Vermont proposes expanding our existing permanent supported housing program, Housing First. Over the past 13 years, Pathways has successfully housed individuals exiting chronic homelessness, institutional settings, and incarceration.

We are providing 3 possible proposals:

1. A statewide proposal that expands Pathways' permanent supportive housing into every Agency of Human Services District in the state as well as strategically expands capacity in existing communities to address unmet needs. (Budget: \$5,776,891)
2. A proposal that expands Pathways' permanent supportive housing into communities currently not served by Pathways PSH program. (Budget: \$2,856,052)
3. A geographically concentrated proposal that significantly expands Pathways' permanent supportive housing in a single community where the most impact from the motel program changes is anticipated (Rutland or Chittenden County). (Budget: \$490,253)

For each proposal, Pathways has utilized historical point-in-time data as well as recent motel utilization [data](#) made available by the Agency of Human Services to inform the scope of the project and anticipated caseload capacity.

Timeline

Over the past 13 years, Pathways Vermont's Housing First program has expanded to nine counties in Vermont through partnerships with the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Corrections. This experience of building and integrating housing and service staff teams in varied communities to quickly meet the needs of service recipients has developed our expertise in identifying and connecting with community partners, landlords, and local resources.

We've adapted the evidence-based practice of Housing First to meet the needs of rural communities and are confident in our ability to stand up new teams. Local teams are integrated into the communities with an understanding of the unique operations and needs of each Vermont community. Our statewide administrative and leadership support structure creates a robust organizational support system and allows each new community to benefit from the organization's wealth of experience in training, oversight, and administration.

Though recruitment and staff retention is a universal challenge in the social service industry at the moment, Pathways has been fortunate to see a relatively low staff vacancy rate in comparison with other similar organizations throughout the state. In 2022, Pathways added two new teams, a Forensic Assertive Community Treatment team in Chittenden County and an Assertive Community Treatment team in Bennington County. In both communities, we were able to hire all new team members within a few months.

We are confident that our unique approach to service delivery, clarity of mission and values, and dedication to offering a competitive and fulfilling employment experience continues to give us an edge in a tight employment market. In an April 2023 Employee Satisfaction Survey conducted by our internal Hiring and Retention Committee, 87% of respondents “...would recommend Pathways to my network as a great place to work.”

Based on previous recent experience, we anticipate we could be fully staffed by 6 months post-implementation, though we could begin serving households before that.

Leveraging Resources

We appreciate that the state is hoping to stand up additional resources quickly to address significant emerging needs. In that regard, we believe we have some capacity to leverage existing community resources to be able to move a number of households into permanent housing with service support quickly. Pathways is the largest sponsoring agency for both Continuum of Care funded housing subsidy as well as the Department of Mental Health Housing Subsidy and Care program. If matched with increased service capacity, there is some existing capacity in both the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness Continuum of Care Permanent Supportive Housing Subsidy as well as the same program for the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance. Pathways is adept at supporting households to creatively and efficiently connect with a variety of housing voucher and subsidy types and has experience supporting households with housing choice vouchers, continuum-funded shelter plus care, DMH housing subsidy and care, HUD-VASH, Department of Corrections rental assistance, rapid rehousing rental assistance, family unification vouchers, time-limited vouchers such as the CARES subsidy, and more.

Additionally, there is an opportunity in both continuum programs to apply for additional funding in the form of new projects to increase subsidy capacity. Pathways has been approached by both continuum’s collaborative applicants about pursuing new projects. With some additional capacity-building resources, we would consider making a direct application, which could result in receiving additional federal funding via the HUD to increase the state’s subsidy capacity.

Finding Housing

Pathways is an active participant in both local and federally recognized continuums of care as their associated coordinated entry processes. We have been in discussion with various local housing providers, both private and non-profit, and have developed relationships with 150+ landlords and housing providers across the state. While housing stock is a significant concern, the depth of these relationships positions us well to continue to secure new housing opportunities for households as they come online.

Over the past two years, Pathways has continued to successfully find permanent housing placements for households - many of whom have significant identified barriers to housing and extensive support needs. In 2021, we supported over 100 households into independent housing units throughout the state in partnership with OEO, CVOEO, and the CARES program. In 2022 and 2023, we more than doubled the size of our Department of Corrections transitional housing program inventory of units. In FY22, we supported 166 households across our housing programs to move into new housing.

Conclusion

To summarize, we recognize there is an unprecedented need in our communities in this moment in time and the call from the state to imminently and urgently address needs. We believe we will be able to make a significant impact with expanded resources to quickly move people from homelessness and exiting institutions into housing. Additionally, we believe that in this crisis, there is an opportunity to balance short-term resources with longer-term ones. This is an opportunity to build the infrastructure within our communities that will not only hold this current moment's households and families but also create capacity to support the needs of households to come: outside of emergency housing, outside of institutions, inside their own homes and embraced in community with us all.

Proposal #1:

To have the greatest impact on the most households, this is a statewide proposal that expands Pathways’ permanent supportive housing into every Agency of Human Services District in the state as well as strategically expands capacity in the communities we are currently serving to address unmet needs.

County	Existing PSH Capacity (DMH & DOC)	Proposed Additional Capacity	Anticipated Households Ineligible for Motel Assistance By 7/1
Rutland	14	75	491
Lamoille	4	25	45
Orleans/Caledonia/Essex	0	50	99
Orange	0	20	29
Chittenden	88	100	331
Washington	36	75	208
Franklin	53	25	82
Addison	15	15	18
Windham	46	75	216
Windsor	35	25	76
Bennington	45	25	177
Requested Investment:			\$5,776,891

Proposal #2:

A proposal that expands Pathways’ permanent supportive housing into communities currently not served by Pathways DMH PSH program.

County	Existing PSH Capacity	Proposed Additional Capacity	Anticipated Households Ineligible for Motel Assistance By 7/1
Rutland	14 (DOC)	100	491
Lamoille	4 (DOC)	25	45
Orleans/Caledonia/Essex	0	50	99
Orange	0	20	29
Requested Investment:			\$2,856,052

Proposal #3:

A geographically concentrated proposal that significantly expands Pathways’ permanent supportive housing in a single community where the most impact from the motel program changes is anticipated (Rutland OR Chittenden County).

County	Existing PSH Capacity	Proposed Additional Capacity	Anticipated Households Ineligible for Motel Assistance By 7/1
Rutland	14 (DOC)	40	491
Or			
Chittenden	88 (DMH/DOC)	40	331
Requested Investment:			\$490,253

About Pathways Vermont

Pathways Vermont, established in 2010, is a non-profit organization whose mission is to end homelessness in Vermont and provide innovative mental health alternatives. We work to make a positive difference in the lives of Vermonters who are experiencing homelessness and mental health challenges. Our work is rooted in values that honor an individual's autonomy and choice. All Pathways Vermont employees are trained in Intentional Peer Support, a practice that frames each relationship between staff and service recipients through lenses of mutuality, trust, and compassion. We are committed to building trauma-informed relationships and spaces and utilizing harm-reduction practices.

Currently, Vermont has the second-highest per-capita rate of homelessness in the country, behind California. Affordable, available housing is out of reach for many, particularly those struggling with issues such as substance use and psychiatric disabilities. The **Housing First** Program addresses homelessness by supporting individuals with histories of homelessness and other life challenges, including criminal histories, substance use, mental health crisis, and trauma, to access and maintain permanent housing. Housing First removes all barriers related to abstinence and treatment compliance prior to receiving housing. Once housed, individuals and families receive ongoing, wrap-around services to build and maintain housing and community stability. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other federal agencies regard Housing First as the best practice to end homelessness.

Our other core programs provide innovative mental health alternatives. With the severe housing crisis in our state as well as high levels of mental health challenges and isolation, our programs and support are more needed than ever. Our Support Line became a 24/7 resource in 2020 as a response to the need for mental health support and connection as individuals across the state faced isolation as a result of the pandemic.

More About Housing First

Housing First is an evidence-based, cost-effective, permanent supportive housing model that supports individuals to maintain independent housing and lead healthy and meaningful lives in their community. This successful approach immediately ends homelessness by supporting individuals and families to locate independent apartments in the community. In addition, Housing First clients receive long-term, multidisciplinary community supports, including service coordination, drug and alcohol

counseling, employment support, psychiatry, nursing care, and representative payee services.

Pathways Vermont's Housing First program serves individuals who have long histories of homelessness and/or institutionalization and who have struggled to maintain independent housing. The program has a reputation for successfully serving individuals who are considered "hard to house," meaning they have exhausted or are ineligible for assistance through existing resources. This population faces multiple barriers to accessing traditional housing services, including active dependence on alcohol and other substances, frequent mental health distress, and complex histories of trauma. Pathways Housing First program serves single adults and adult-headed households.

Housing Placement and Support: The basic philosophy of Housing First asserts that while homelessness is a complex issue with multiple intersecting causes, the solution to homelessness is simple: housing. The model intervenes in the revolving door of services experienced by many individuals experiencing homelessness by providing immediate access to low-barrier and permanent housing in independent rental units using federal and state housing subsidies. The program's Housing Coordinators work with local landlords to identify suitable units that meet each client's individual needs. Housing Coordinators function as intermediary landlords, supporting the clients to develop skills necessary to maintain independent housing, such as paying rent, basic maintenance, and reporting damage.

Service Coordination: A major component of the Housing First program is supporting individuals to make a sustainable plan for success following move-in. This includes connecting individuals with mainstream resources that could help facilitate achieving their self-defined goals. Examples include health insurance, primary care, general assistance, vocational/rehabilitative, and community resources. Service coordination also aims to build a network of relevant service providers, supporting individuals to access community-based resources rather than relying on emergency services to address healthcare needs. The service team meets with the service participants at least once a week, at their homes or in the community.

Psychosocial/Rehabilitative Support Services: The program provides a wide range of support services to assist clients in reaching self-identified goals. These services include independent living skills support, supportive employment services, psychiatric services, and substance use and recovery support. These services are intended to improve self-empowerment, support individuals to develop skills to increase independence and address behaviors that have contributed to homelessness in the past. These services are available as needed and at a frequency desired by the service recipient.