

CHITTENDEN COUNTY HOMELESS ALLIANCE

WORKING TO END HOMELESSNESS

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How does someone experiencing homelessness find supportive, subsidized housing in Chittenden County?



Before we get to our local housing and homelessness scene, there are 3 pieces of information that you need to understand the big picture.

- 1 The federal agency known as The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (commonly referred to as HUD) provides a lot of the funding for state and local programs for homeless programs. These programs have a variety of structures and requirements and these often change over time. State level programs also provide a funding as do non-profit organizations. HUD is a dominant figure in this equation.

- 2 Someone who is homeless and is seeking housing is referred to as "a client." They may be an individual, a couple or a family (also referred to as a "household").

- 3 Housing and supports for homeless clients are always in short supply. Unfortunately there is no guarantee that a client will be matched with both or either, but CCHA is working diligently to make homelessness rare and brief.



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So where does a person start the path to housing?

A

The client will begin by calling or going to the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO) and making an appointment with a Housing Navigator. CVOEO has many programs – not strictly for those experiencing homelessness – but one program provides “housing navigation” for this population. The Housing Navigator will be working with the client for months, with the aim of helping him or her to find housing and, equally important, to find all of the subsidies and supports he or she might need to get into housing and stay there. This Housing Navigation includes helping the client to gather all of the documents needed – including an ID. This can take time.

If it's more convenient, the client can also begin the process by going to:

- o **COTS** (Committee on Temporary Shelter) – emergency shelter
- o **SPECTRUM** Youth and Family Services – shelter and services for young people in crisis
- o **Cathedral Square** – housing and services for elders
- o **STEPS** to End Domestic Violence – housing and services for victims of domestic violence

The client lets a staffer there know that they're interested in finding housing in Chittenden County and they will help the client fill out a brief initial screening form. The staffer will fax it over to CVOEO and a Housing Navigator will reach out to the client. (This initial screening form is an extra piece of documentation which is not necessary if they go directly to CVOEO.)



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B

Once the client has made contact with CVOEO, he or she (or the whole family in many cases) will be entered into HMIS (Homeless Management Information System). (HMIS is a HUD requirement.) At the same time the client is placed on a “master-list” of all those who are experiencing homelessness in our local area and have come to CVOEO to find housing. If the client has not already been assigned a Housing Navigator (because one was not available when they first made contact with CVOEO), they are assigned one at this point. **There are currently 3 Housing Navigators working at CVOEO.**

C

Almost every week there is a meeting of most of those in Chittenden County who have housing, subsidies and services to offer, along with the Housing Navigators. This large group is called the Community Housing Review Committee (CHR) and they include the Burlington Housing Authority, Pathways and many, many others. They look over the master-list together and try their best to match people on the list with subsidy, services (if required) and housing. This can take time.

D

A few notes about the master-list. The list does prioritize clients based on a few indicators, but the **Community Housing Review Committee** always stays flexible. Clients are currently prioritized roughly, on:

- A Vulnerability Score (generated through a questionnaire)
- The client’s “chronic homelessness” status (this is a HUD definition)
- Length of time experiencing homelessness

But there are also a simultaneous set of priorities based on “referral readiness,” meaning the degree to which the client has all of their documentation prepared. When the client is going through Housing Navigation, they are categorized roughly as being in one of 4 phases:



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PHASE 1: Recently introduced to a Housing Navigator -- beginning the process.

PHASE 2: Barriers to housing have been identified (lack of ID, lack of paperwork to apply for subsidy, etc.)

PHASE 3: A good deal of progress has been made in the effort to help the client secure all of his or her documentation.

PHASE 4: Ready to be matched.

Clients in phases 3 and 4 are prioritized just by necessity.

E When a client finds housing, they may – in some cases – continue to receive the types of supports that will enable them to stay housed.

This has been an overview of what is called the COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEM. Coordinated Entry is a nationwide effort to get local agencies and organizations coordinated in their efforts to help the local homeless population enter into permanent housing. Taken together, the local agencies and organizations are also often called the Continuum of Care (CoC).

Although each agency operates independently, they have always been in at least casual coordination. In the last few years, coordination and communication has greatly increased and formalized. The whole group taken together has a part-time administrator who, among other things, posts minutes of their meetings together on a centralized website: cchavt.org. The group of agencies and organizations together are called the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance.

Please go to the website to find a list of all of the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance partners participating in the coordinated entry system.

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