

MEMORANDUM

From: ESD Deputy Commissioner Richard Giddings

To: ESD Community Partners & Staff

Date: June 27, 2013

Re: Changes to GA Emergency Housing Rules

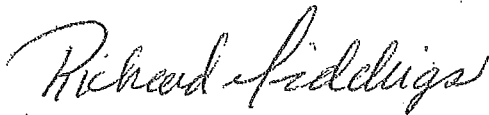
As many of you know, ESD spent over \$4 Million on emergency housing in FY 2013, and the Vermont Legislature reduced the amount we can use in FY 2014 to \$1.5 Million. These funds can be used for emergency housing:

1. In catastrophic situations (e.g., a natural disaster such as a flood, fire, or hurricane or eviction over which the applicant had no control);
2. During periods of harsh winter weather (*cold weather exemption*¹); and
3. For vulnerable populations without catastrophic need for emergency housing — with supervisory approval and only for up to 28 days within a 12-month period.

The Act also directed ESD to adopt emergency rules by July 1, 2013 that define eligibility for vulnerable populations without catastrophic need — based on a system that assesses physical health and safety risks. These rules will be available on ESD's website at <http://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/rules>.

Attached is a two-pager that can help you to explain the new emergency housing rules to your clients.

Please contact Chris Dalley at (802) 769-6271 if you have any questions about the new rules.



**Richard Giddings, Deputy Commissioner
Economic Services Division
Department for Children and Families**

¹ During harsh winter weather, eligibility for temporary emergency shelter provided through General Assistance (GA) may be relaxed to encourage persons who are homeless and without adequate financial resources to seek safe shelter.

Changes to Emergency Housing Rules for ESD's General Assistance Program

~ Effective July 15, 2013 ~

- ▶ The Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2014 allows the Economic Services Division (ESD) of the Department for Children and Families to use up to \$1.5 Million for emergency housing:
 1. In catastrophic situations (e.g., a natural disaster such as a flood, fire, or hurricane or an eviction over which the applicant had no control);
 2. During periods of harsh winter weather (*cold weather exemption*¹); and
 3. For vulnerable populations without catastrophic need for emergency housing. *This requires supervisory approval and may only be for up to 28 days of housing within a 12-month period.*

To read the act [*Act H.530: An act relating to making appropriations for the support of government*] go to <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/docs/2014/Acts/ACT050.pdf> and scroll to Section E.321.1 - GENERAL ASSISTANCE EMERGENCY HOUSING on page 169.

- ▶ The Act forbids ESD to use funds to pay for emergency housing if:
 - Appropriate shelter space is available; or
 - The individual was responsible for his or her eviction due to circumstances over which the individual had control.
- ▶ The Act directed ESD to adopt emergency rules by July 1, 2013 that define eligibility for vulnerable populations without catastrophic need for emergency housing — based on a system that assesses physical health and safety risks. These rules will be available on ESD's website at <http://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/rules>.
- ▶ ESD has identified 11 categories of vulnerable populations that may be eligible for emergency housing — without catastrophic need (*see chart on next page*). The housing of families with young children and individuals with severe disabilities is a priority.

- ▶ These changes come into effect on July 15, 2013. This means that some people who were previously eligible for emergency housing may no longer be eligible on July 15, 2013.

Assessing Vulnerable Populations for Eligibility for Emergency Housing

Each category is assigned points. Households may qualify for emergency housing if they have a total of 6 or more points.

Vulnerable Population Category	Points
Disabled Veteran (<i>as defined in 38 U.S.C. § 4211</i>)	1
Person age 65 or older	1
Person with an open Family Services Division case, receiving services	1
Person who is getting SSI or SSDI	3
Person who has applied for SSI or SSDI	1
Person who is in third trimester of pregnancy	2
Children in household:	
- At least one is age 6 or younger	3
- All are between the ages of 7 and 17	2
Person who was discharged from a hospital in the past 30 days (with 48 hours or more inpatient hospital stay) and who has an ongoing medical needs related to hospitalization	2
Person over 18 who aged out of DCF custody within the past 3 years	1
Reach Up recipient	1
Person on probation or parole with the Department of Corrections who was incarcerated for 12 consecutive months within the past 6 months	1

1. **Cold Weather Exemption:**

During harsh winter weather, eligibility for temporary emergency shelter provided through General Assistance (GA) may be relaxed to encourage persons who are homeless and without adequate financial resources to seek safe shelter.