

# VSH Futures Project

## Housing Recommendations of Futures Advisory Committee

October 16, 2006

The Advisory Committee made the following recommendations to AHS Secretary Cynthia LaWare based on the report of the Housing Development Work Group.

- 1. Housing is an essential element in the transformation of Vermont's system of mental health care. Flexible, creative housing options with home and peer services that meet client needs and preferences are recommended. Current funding levels dedicated to housing options for mental health consumers are woefully inadequate.**

**RECOMMEND: \$1 million in new resources for FY 08; \$1 million additional in FY 09; and \$1 million more in FY 10<sup>1</sup>**

This is a multi-year strategy to accomplish the following objectives:

- A. Provide a housing subsidy for people needing housing and supports to be discharged from the Vermont State Hospital.

Prioritize some of the new resources for people at VSH whose discharge is delayed due to financial barriers, particularly their inability to afford housing.<sup>2</sup>

- B. Increase the Housing Contingency Fund to serve CRT clients:

- 1) A portion of the new resources would stabilize the Housing Contingency Fund by increasing the rent subsidies of the CRT population currently served. The increase is needed to account for inflation and the corresponding increase in Fair Market Rents (FMR).
- 2) A portion of the new resources would expand the number of CRT clients served by the Housing Contingency Fund, achieving a net increase in the number of people served.

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<sup>1</sup> In the current fiscal year 2007, \$390,000 is appropriated for the Housing Contingency Fund. As the program is currently designed, the HCF is available only to CRT clients.

<sup>2</sup> Designated Agencies documented the lack of housing for people who could otherwise be discharged from VSH. See Futures Plan (Appendix 7, February 4, 2005)

2. **Replacement of the Vermont State Hospital with a primary inpatient psychiatric program on the Fletcher Allen Health Care campus is the preferred option.**<sup>3</sup>

**Expanded housing options are needed in all communities, including those where:**

- A. **mental health programs are located;**
- B. **there is an acute shortage of affordable housing; and**
- C. **mental health consumers choose to live following treatment.**

**RECOMMEND: Allocate new resources to establish a capital development fund to support expanded housing options on a statewide basis including but not limited to communities hosting inpatient, residential, crisis bed, or other mental health facilities.**

**A capital development fund would support the much needed expansion of affordable, appropriate housing options for mental health consumers whether they choose to return to their home towns or live in or near communities hosting new mental health programs.**<sup>4</sup>

3. **Support the use of best practices among CRT housing coordinators. Encourage close working relationships with housing authorities, landlords, and other partners.**
4. **Maintain effective communications with Vermont's congressional delegation to secure additional federal housing support.**

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<sup>3</sup> The Futures Plan also proposes two smaller capacity inpatient programs at the Rutland Regional Medical Center and the Brattleboro Retreat.

<sup>4</sup> Planning should begin in FY 08 and capitalization of the fund should occur after the location(s) of inpatient programs is determined.