

Homelessness and hunger grow

The high cost of living creates a pinch felt even among Vermonters with full-time employment. A growing number of working families are living in shelters for increasingly long periods of time.¹⁸ Some communities are drastically short on emergency shelters, leaving many Vermonters out in the cold.¹⁹

At the same time, hunger is on the rise in Vermont, especially among children and elders. In counties stricken with concentrated poverty, use of food pantries and the need for emergency hunger relief has spiked in recent years.



the FACTS

- In 2005, Vermont's homeless shelters reported a 52% increase in the number of beds occupied over the previous four years. And while six years ago, the average length of stay was 13 nights, current stays stretch to an average of 26 nights. Among occupants, shelter workers report, are an increasing number of families, as well as adults who are employed full-time.²⁰
- Approximately 4,000 Vermonters are homeless at some point during the course of each year. The people most likely to experience homelessness are families headed by single women and single adults under age 65 who live below the poverty line.²¹
- Emergency shelter is a critical unmet need in Vermont. Between July 2004 and July 2005, shelters filled to capacity turned away 1,443 homeless individuals.²²
- In 12 of Vermont's 14 counties, the total population served by food shelves has increased. From 2003 to 2005, the number of families with minor children using food shelves has increased 28%.²³
- While Vermont seniors represent only 13% of the state's population, they represent 21% of food shelf customers, jumping 12% from 2005 to 2006.²⁴