

For Immediate Release, March 20, 2024

Court Issues Injunction to Keep Individual Plaintiffs Sheltered

Groundworks Collaborative, Inc., et al. v. Vermont Agency of Human Services, et al.; Vermont Superior Court, Chittenden Unit, Case No. 24-CV-00999.

Today the Chittenden Superior Court issued a Temporary Restraining Order in the GA Emergency Housing lawsuit that Vermont Legal Aid filed on Friday, ordering the State to keep individual named plaintiffs sheltered in motels. Last Friday, the Court denied Plaintiffs' request for a Temporary Restraining Order on behalf of plaintiff homeless service provider organizations. After these organizations talked to numerous people over the weekend who were not assessed for eligibility before they were kicked out of motels on Friday, Vermont Legal Aid asked the Court to add three individual named plaintiffs and to consider a new Temporary Restraining Order, which the Court granted today.

Two of these individual plaintiffs are a couple who are eligible because one is 66 years old and the other has several disabilities, but they were not told about the expanded eligibility and were incorrectly told on Friday to leave the motel where they had been staying. They spent the weekend outside. The third individual plaintiff requires oxygen 24 hours a day and needs to be in a place with power to support his oxygen machines. He was told on Friday to leave the motel where he had been staying, but the motel allowed him stay there over the weekend as he tried to verify his disability to the Department.

The Plaintiffs have also requested a Preliminary Injunction and have asked the Court to certify a class, so that everyone in this situation is covered by the Court's decisions. A hearing on these matters is set for Thursday, March 21.

VLA filed this lawsuit because the State had failed to reach people who were covered by the Legislature in the Budget Adjustment Act and had refused to extend the wintertime shelter program to give time for this to happen.

“Homeless service provider organizations around the state, including the plaintiffs in this case, have been working tirelessly to reach people who were wrongly kicked out of motels on Friday,” says VLA Attorney Sandra Paritz, one of the attorneys for the plaintiffs. “The individual plaintiffs who have gotten relief today are just a few of the extremely vulnerable people who have been harmed by the Department's actions. We hope that everyone will be assessed soon and sheltered if they are eligible.”

For more information, please go to <https://www.vtlegalaid.org/news>

For press inquiries, please contact Rebecca Plummer, Vermont Legal Aid, rplummer@vtlegalaid.org, (802) 495-0459.