



# ULSTER COUNTY OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

## Ulster County Emergency Housing Snapshot

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### Who uses emergency shelter in Ulster County?

According to the 2020-2021 Homelessness Point-in-Time Count conducted on January 29, 2021, in Ulster County there were 331 persons living in emergency shelters and 52 unsheltered persons. Of the 331 sheltered individuals, 115 of them were children and 216 were adults. The Point-in-Time Count refers to a sheltered and unsheltered count of homeless persons. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that Continuums of Care conduct an annual count of homeless persons who are sheltered in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and Safe Havens on a single night. Black and Hispanic people are over-represented in the emergency housing population compared to the regular population of Ulster County.

### What funding is available for emergency housing?

Emergency assistance is available when an individual or family is facing an emergency. Homelessness is defined as an emergency and the Ulster County Department of Social Services can provide support for individuals and families under one of the following programs even if the individual or family is not otherwise receiving support.

Emergency assistance under the Family Assistance, Safety Net Assistance, and Emergency Assistance to Adults is provided in accordance with regulation that defines "temporary housing" as family shelters room and board, hotel/motel and shelters for adults. See 18 NYCRR 352.35 (b)(4).

**FA (Family Assistance)** – Family Assistance provides cash assistance to eligible needy families that include a minor child living with a parent (including families where both parents are in the household) or a caretaker relative. FA operates under federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) guidelines. Under FA, eligible adults are limited to receiving benefits for a total of 60 months in their lifetime and adults who are determined to be able to work must comply with federal work requirements to receive FA benefits. After 60 months, adults become the responsibility of the State and County government. See 18 NYCRR 369.4(d).

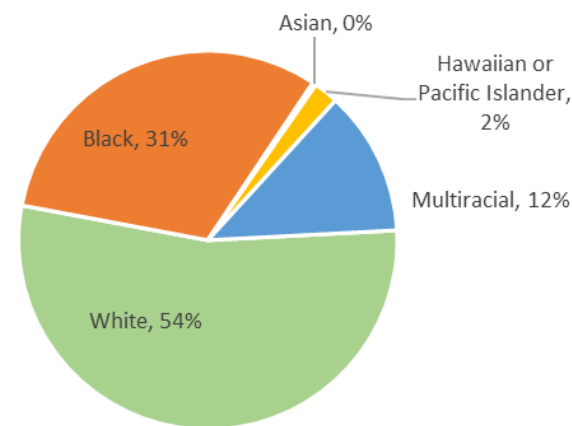
**SNA (Safety Net Assistance)** – Safety Net Assistance provides cash assistance to eligible needy individuals and families who are not eligible for FA including single adults, childless couples, children living without adult relatives, families of people abusing drugs or alcohol or refusing drug/alcohol treatment or testing, as well as aliens eligible for temporary assistance, but who are not eligible for federal reimbursement. See 18 NYCRR 370.3.

**EAA (Emergency Assistance to Adults)** – Emergency Assistance to Adults can grant assistance to aged, blind or disabled individuals and couples who have been determined eligible for or are receiving Federal supplemental security income (SSI) or State Supplementation Program (SSP) payments. See 18 NYCRR 397. This funding can be used to establish a home (including making a security deposit and pay moving expenses). See 18 NYCRR 397.1(b).

### How is emergency housing assistance allocated?

When an individual or family presents to DSS an emergency need for housing due to homelessness, a Social Welfare Examiner (SWE) at DSS performs intake procedures consisting of interviewing and gathering information about the individual or family. Placement in boarding homes is the first preference for individuals presenting with an emergency shelter need, as boarding homes are considered permanent housing. Shelters and hotels are used if a boarding house placement cannot be made. SWEs reach out to the hotels that accept DSS clients daily to inventory available space. If a boarding home placement cannot be made, the SWE will identify whether one of the hotels has a vacancy that can meet the needs of the individual or family. Unfortunately, available vacancies may not be in a geography of choice for the individual or family because the placements are made based on availability at the time of the need.

### Race of People in Emergency Housing

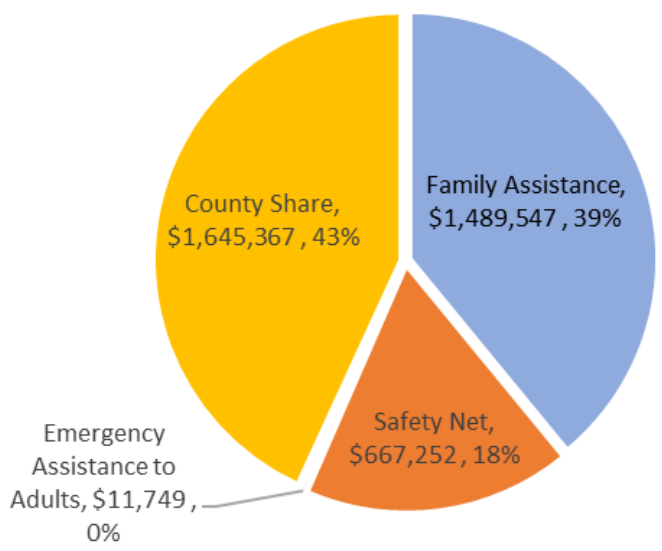


Ulster County expended \$3.8 million on emergency housing in 2020. Of that, 43% was borne by Ulster County taxpayers. The remaining amounts expended were funded via state and federal aid. These expenditures are aggregated with other expenditures in the Ulster County budget, so it is not possible for the Comptroller's Office to report to taxpayers on whether those expenditures are in line with budgeted amounts. The Comptroller's Office also does not exercise claims audit responsibilities for these transactions which are accounted for in the state financial system WMS to which the County Comptroller's Office has requested but not been granted access.

Budgeted and Actual Expenditures and Revenues Associated with Emergency Housing				
	2019		2020	
Revenues	Budgeted	Actual	Budgeted	Actual
Federal Aid, Home Relief	84,126	17,951	64,051	11,628
State Aid, Home Relief	1,858,858	1,715,400	1,816,671	1,484,151
State Aid, Family Assistance	224,132	402,712	252,459	262,913
State Aid, Emergency Aid for Adults	79,700	55,247	70,000	22,325
Expenditures				
Home Relief, Contractual Services	7,200,000	6,691,177	7,100,000	5,867,269

Ulster County contracts with Family of Woodstock for emergency housing, case management services, meals and transportation at the Darmstadt Shelter and Family Inn. These 2020 contracts were for \$437,123 and \$872,277 respectively.

### 2020 Emergency Housing Expenditures



Emergency Housing Vendor	2020	2019
Family Inn	\$872,278	\$1,230,576
Darmstadt	\$486,738	\$592,807
Motel A	\$437,123	\$451,733
Motel B	\$387,720	\$463,501
Motel C	\$313,076	\$290,043
Motel D	\$268,106	\$254,058
Motel E	\$216,232	\$250,406
Motel F	\$189,856	\$255,740
Motel G	\$180,965	\$184,066
Motel H	\$170,128	\$72,315
Motel I	\$113,546	\$161,638
Motel J	\$51,357	
Motel K	\$37,437	\$4,935
Motel L	\$36,441	
Motel M	\$26,700	
Motel N	\$24,107	\$4,556
Motel O	\$2,105	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,813,915</b>	<b>\$4,216,376</b>

For vendors paid strictly for emergency shelter, the average rate paid to hotels was \$69.47 per night but the rate varied widely across vendors from a low of \$43.57 per night at Motel F to a high of \$186.75 per night paid to the Motel J, which was to accommodate a one-time special family need. Totals paid to each vendor and summarized rate information were provided to the Comptroller's Office by Department of Social Services, not from contracts or invoices. Payments for these services and placements are made through the state financial system WMS to which the Ulster County Comptroller's Office does not have access.

### Who received emergency housing and for how long in 2020?

In 2020, Ulster County provided 51,781 nights of emergency shelter consisting of 24,939 nights of family stays and 26,842 nights of individual stays in emergency shelter. In comparison, Ulster County had 51,856 nights of family stays in emergency housing and 38,819 nights of individual stays in 2015. The eviction moratorium likely reduced the number of emergency housing nights during 2020.

Of the nights in 2020 that emergency shelter was provided, 52% of stays were used by individuals and 48% were used by families. Families have a longer average length of stay of 97 days, versus 70 days on average for individuals. Length of stay is driven by inability to find suitable permanent housing, and some locations experience longer average stays than others. For example, 37 families staying at Motel C had an average stay of 165 days. We were not able to tell from the data provided how many people were contained within family units or the relative ages of any of the served population.

Individuals			
Vendor Name	Individual Nights	# of Individuals	Average Individual Stay
Motel A	7,718	73	106
Darmstadt	4,926	116	42
Motel B	3,200	31	103
Motel C	2,927	40	73
Motel D	1,968	19	104
Motel E	1,831	23	80
Motel F	1,655	29	57
Motel K	483	6	81
Motel G	472	4	118
Motel H	435	7	62
Motel L	428	10	43
Motel M	357	15	24
Motel N	336	1	336
Motel I	73	5	15
Motel O	29	1	29
Motel J	4	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,842</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>70</b>

Families			
Vendor Name	Family Nights	# of Families	Average Family Stay
Motel C	6,112	37	165
Motel B	3,680	35	105
Motel F	2,702	31	87
Motel G	2,603	28	93
Family Inn	2,196	36	61
Motel D	1,938	22	88
Motel I	1,721	16	108
Motel E	1,667	13	128
Motel H	1,605	27	59
Motel J	271	1	271
Motel L	239	8	30
Motel K	205	2	103
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,939</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>97</b>

### Emergency Housing Going Forward

Ulster County announced a partnership with RUPCO to assist in the purchase of the Quality Inn to serve as a comprehensive emergency housing shelter with wrap around services using a variety of state and federal funding. Ulster County has also identified the former Ulster County jail at Golden Hill property and engaged Penrose to develop additional needed housing. These steps will only begin to mitigate the need for additional housing and housing resources.

Additionally, Ulster County should examine ways to use Emergency Assistance to Adults to assist in securing permanent housing whenever possible. Expanding the inventory of affordable housing in Ulster County is necessary to increase the placement options for individuals and families stuck in long term hotel shelters. Finally, every tool available including tax incentives and philanthropy should be considered in addressing this most basic need for services.

