

# Money Follows the Person

## Transition Fund Study and Increase Request

Since MFP's inception in Vermont in 2012, MFP participants have had transition funds available in the amount of \$2,500.00. This transition fund amount has not changed over the history of the program in Vermont.

The Vermont MFP program is requesting an increase of transition funds allocations of \$6,500.00 for a total of \$9,000 transition funds available to MFP participants. Additionally, the Vermont MFP program will be requesting a bi-annual increase to this transition fund amount in direct relation to the Northeast Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate during the previous three years. Proposed calculation method:  $(\$9000/\text{CPI for 2025}) * (\text{CPI for new YEAR}) = \text{NEW AMOUNT}$ . The amounts shall be rounded to the nearest \$50.

The following will be an analysis of recent transition fund usage of Vermont MFP participants between 2019 and 2023, how those funds have been generally spent over that period along with outstanding needs of these individuals and generalized needs that impact a request for increased transition funds allocation to the Vermont MFP program participants.

### MFP Transition Fund Categories of Use 2019-2023

Between 2019 and 2023 data collected related to how transition funds were spent by individuals shows that funds are largely spent on personal items, furnishing and adaptive equipment. Items in these categories are basic needs when transitioning from an institutional setting to a home-based setting. In 2023, 40% of participants had receipts for adaptive equipment, 38% of participants had receipts for personal items and 30% of participants had receipts for furnishings. Further trends in transition fund usage can be seen in Figures X and Y.

Figure X

# **MOST USED RATES OF TRANSITION FUND CATEGORY USAGE BY UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL BY YEAR 2019-2023**

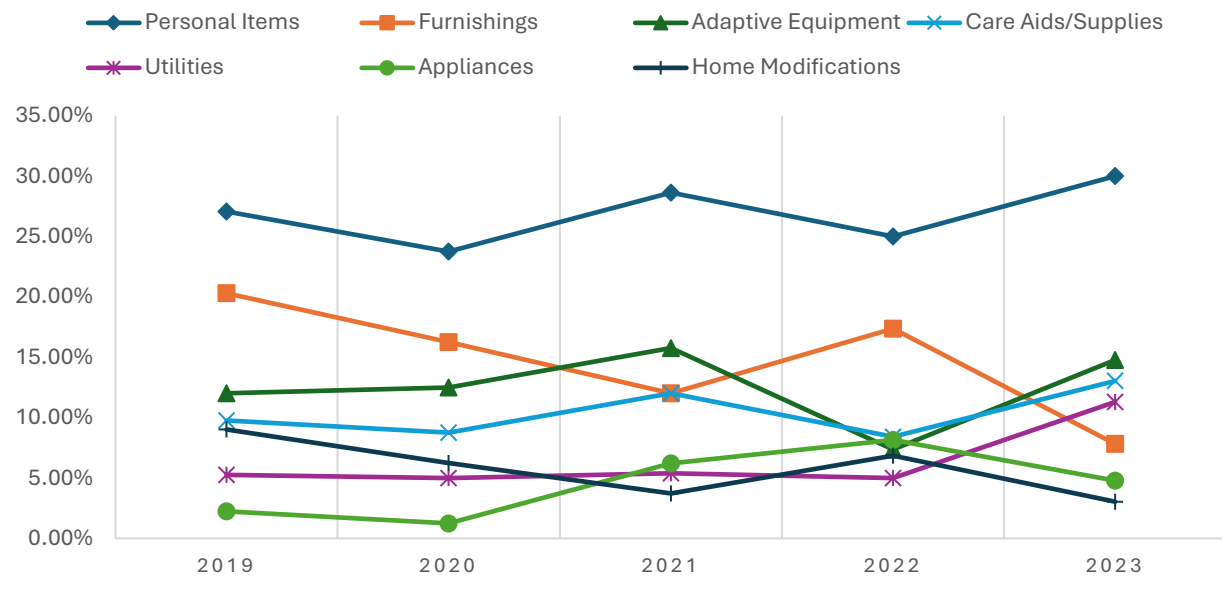
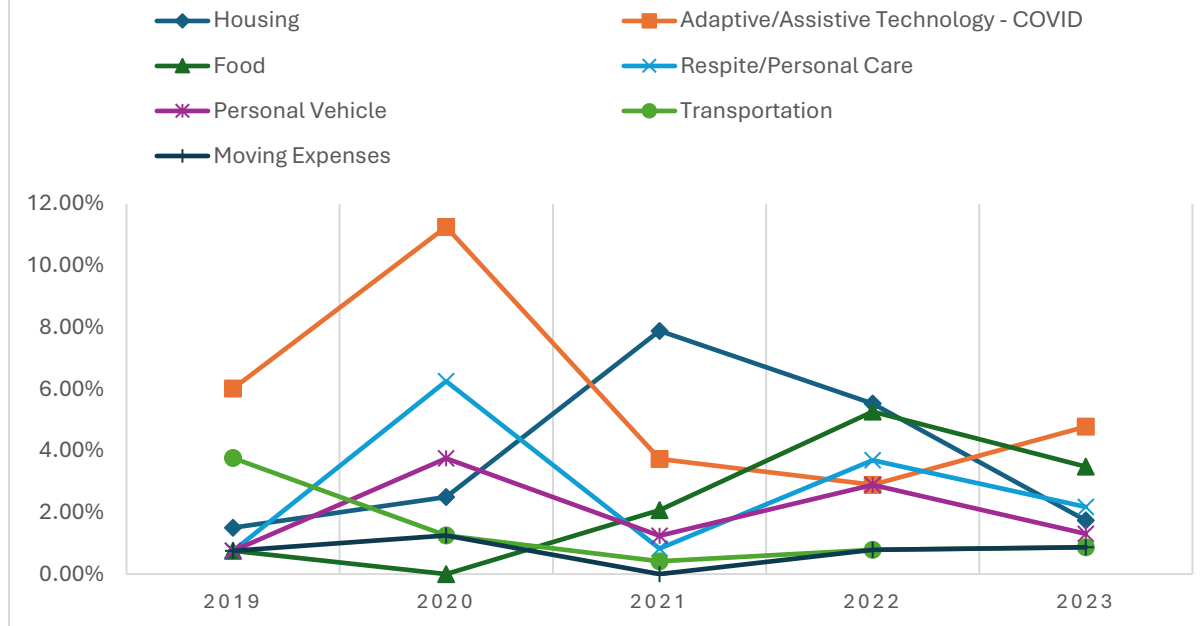


Figure Y

## LEAST USED RATES OF TRANSITION FUND CATEGORY USAGE BY UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL BY YEAR 2019- 2023



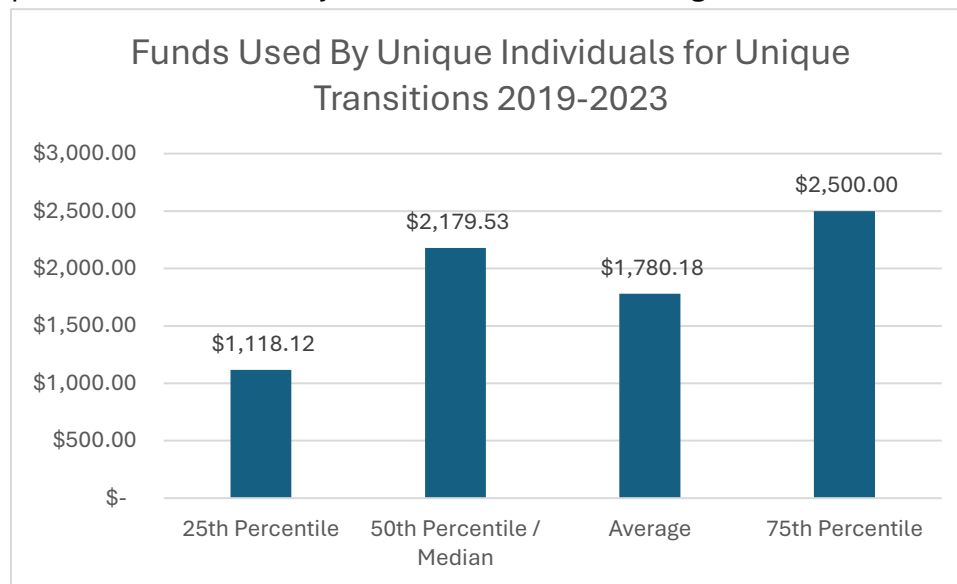
### MFP Participant Unmet Needs

Annually, MFP participants participate in an assessment process to identify their individual needs. One question included in this annual assessment is “Do you need assistance obtaining or repairing any of the following?” Answer options related to this question are related to assistive devices or needed home modifications. In a review of MFP participant’s responses to this

question one year before or after their MFP transition reveals that 25% of individuals reported a need for a kitchen or bathroom modification and 24% of individuals reported a need of a ramp. These are home modification needs that would create a more accessible and safer home environment for an individual transition from a nursing home environment to a HCBS setting. In comparison to the data shared in Figures X & Y, it is clear that MFP transition funds are currently funding immediate and basic needs at the time of transition; needs related to personal items, furnishing and adaptive equipment needed to transition into the community. Home modifications are higher cost items, and the current transition funds likely do not allow for participants to meet their needs for home modifications resulting in a safer home environment with the current funding rate.

### MFP Transition Fund Usage 2019-2023

Transition fund usage is documenting using Vermont's MMIS claims system. Data analysis done in 2024 looking back at the previous five calendar years of transition fund usage shows trends in transition fund usage for individuals during that time.



Between 2019 and 2023 there were 235 MFP participants that had a transition in which transition funds were used. In that time the median amount of transition funds used by a unique individual during a unique transition was \$2,179. Figure B shows the average fund usage along with the 25<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentile. We know that transition funds are most frequently spent on basic need items such as personal items, furnishing and adaptive equipment along with the fact that the median fund usage in the past five years was \$2,179; almost at the limit of the current transition fund limit. Additionally, there are ~25% of MFP participants that continue to require

kitchen or bathroom modification and/ or a ramp. These kitchen, bathroom and ramp needs would incur cost that would not be able to be paid for with remaining funds given the current transition fund allocation to Vermont MFP participants.

## Inflation

Increasing inflation rates has been a financial struggle for many Vermonters in the last few years. The Vermont MFP team understands that inflation has impacted the quality and quantity of resources that MFP transition funds are able to support successful participant transitions. Transition funds are used by MFP participants to purchase goods and services that assist them in living in the community. Top purchase categories include durable home goods and home modifications, clothing, and food. As shown below, a participant who needs one or two items could use most, if not all, of their transition funds. Since MFP Transition Funds are utilized for products commonly represented on the consumer price index, the index provides a meaningful measure of the purchasing power of the transition funds. Without routine modifications of the amount of transition funds available, the impact of these funds will steadily decrease.

### **Common items purchased by MFP participants:**

1. TV: A 32-inch television is about average for a living room or bedroom. This size television can range from \$90 to \$185 on average.
2. Recliner/Couch: In general, a recliner is approximately \$300 to \$1800, with most in the \$500 to \$750 range. A loveseat is about \$300 to \$800 on average.
3. Mattress: Mattresses come in various sizes (twin, full/double, queen, king, California king, etc.). A full/double mattress ranges from about \$200 to \$1000 depending on quality, material, and brand. In general, full-size mattresses are approximately \$400. Note this does not include a box spring as not every mattress requires one.
4. Bed frame: Bed frames are made in various sizes to fit mattresses. One can purchase a full size bed frame for about \$200.
5. Washer and Dryer: In general, a washer and dryer set or combination appliance ranges from \$1000 to \$3000, with most around \$1500 to \$2000.
6. Ramp: The purchase price of a custom ramp depends on several factors: how long the ramp needs to be, if there are any turns, the weight the ramp must support, etc. Because of this, it is difficult to estimate the cost of a ramp for an MFP participant. I was able to find ramps ranging from \$300 to \$3500 depending on how long the ramp was and what material it was made of. A ramp could also be constructed by a carpenter. In this case, the participant would need to

pay for materials and labor. Carpenters charge anywhere from \$35 to \$200 per hour depending on skill level and location.

7. Stair Lift/Stair Chair: The purchase price of stair lifts and stair chairs depend on many factors including style, durability, and brand. In general, stair lifts and stair chairs range from \$1000 to \$3000, with most about \$1200.

## Accessibility Issues in Vermont Housing Stock

In 2011 the American Housing Survey (AHS) was published, and it measure the availability of accessible features in housing for persons with serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs or who use a mobility device for a condition that is not a temporary injury. The results of this study indicated that at the time found that fewer than 5 percent of units have the features needed to accommodate a person with moderate mobility difficulties. (1) Vermont's housing stock is not in any better shape than the national trends. In fact, according to Vermont Housing Finance Agency, 75% of Vermont's housing stock was built prior to the Fair Housing Act and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, which requires new housing to be accessible. This fact along with Vermont's shockingly low rental vacancy rate of 3.2% (2) impacts the ability of MFP participants to find housing that is accessible without doing modifications to meet their individual accessibility needs.

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### Citations:

- 1) *Assessing the accessibility of America's housing stock for physically disabled persons* (2011) *Assessing the Accessibility of America's Housing Stock for Physically Disabled Persons* | HUD USER. Available at: [https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr\\_edge\\_research\\_101315.html#:~:text=The%20results%20of%20the%20study%20suggest%20that%20the,to%20accommodate%20a%20person%20with%20moderate%20mobility%20difficulties](https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr_edge_research_101315.html#:~:text=The%20results%20of%20the%20study%20suggest%20that%20the,to%20accommodate%20a%20person%20with%20moderate%20mobility%20difficulties). (Accessed: 24 October 2024).

- 2) *Vermont Housing Needs Assessment (2024) Agency of Commerce and Community Development*. Available at: <https://accd.vermont.gov/housing/plans-data-rules/needs-assessment> (Accessed: 24 October 2024).