

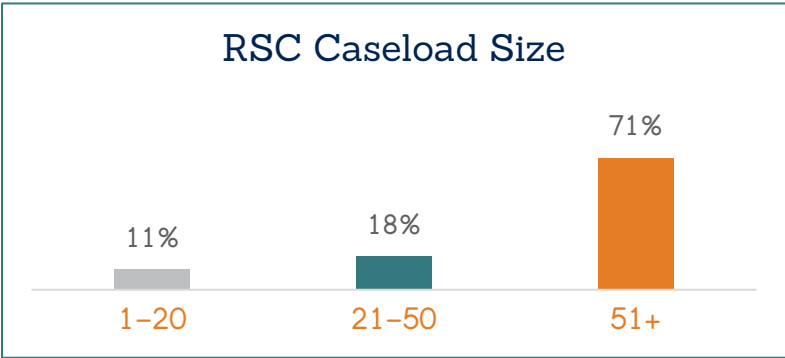
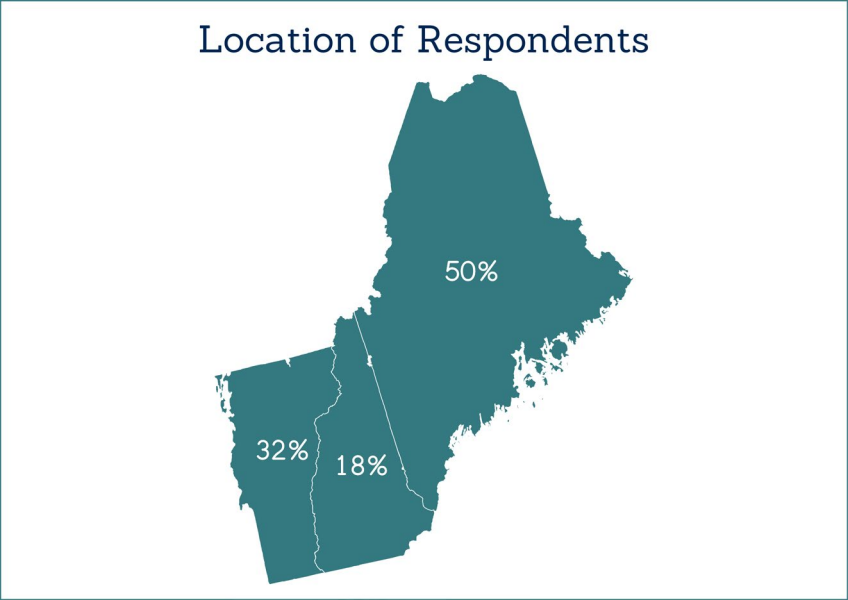
## Northern New England Resident Services Survey 2023

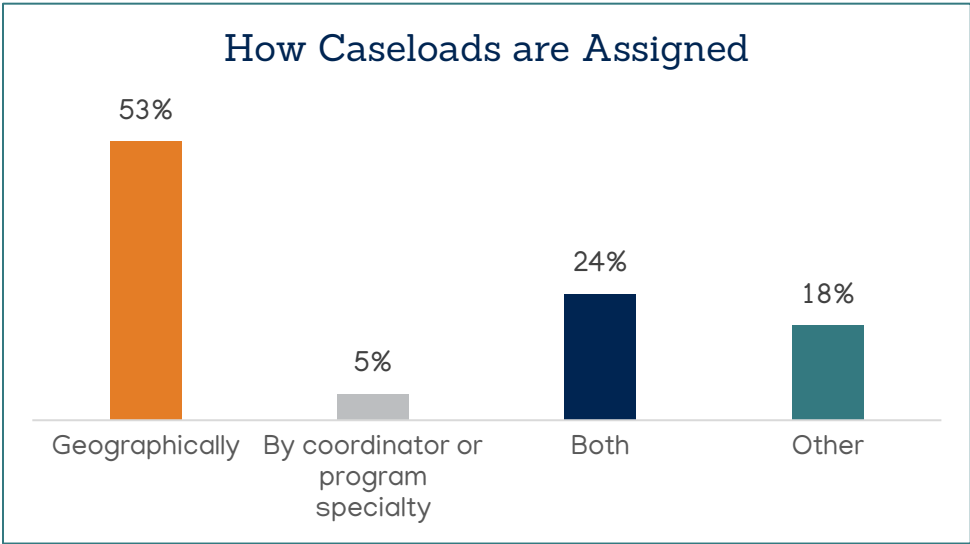
Evernorth conducted a survey of resident service coordinators, managers, and other service-related staff members to better understand the structure and funding of resident service programs in our portfolio. We also conducted 9 staff interviews, 3 per state, to learn more about the successes and challenges that respondents experience in serving affordable housing residents.

Total # of Respondents: **94**

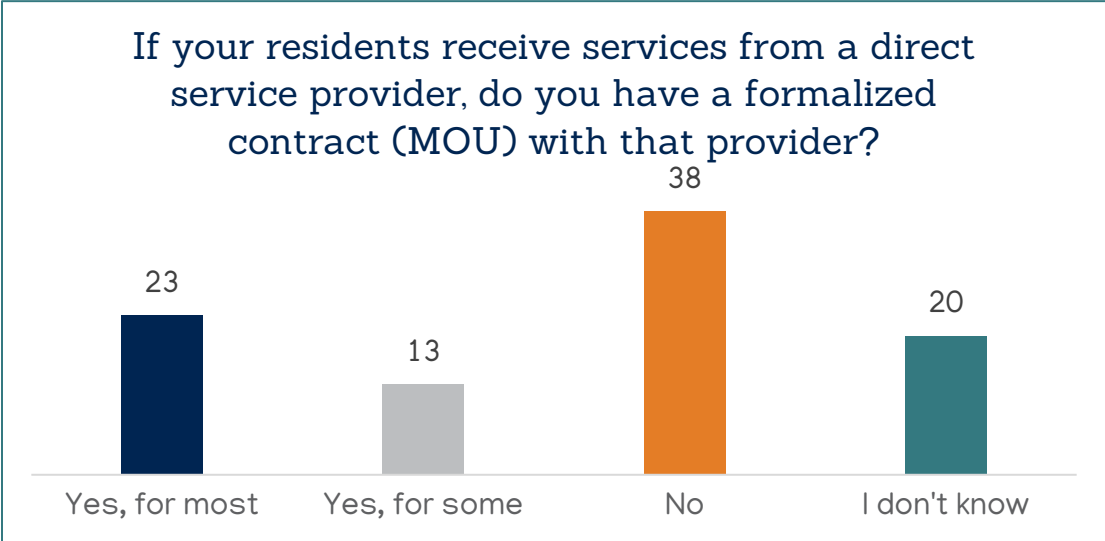
### Role of Respondents:

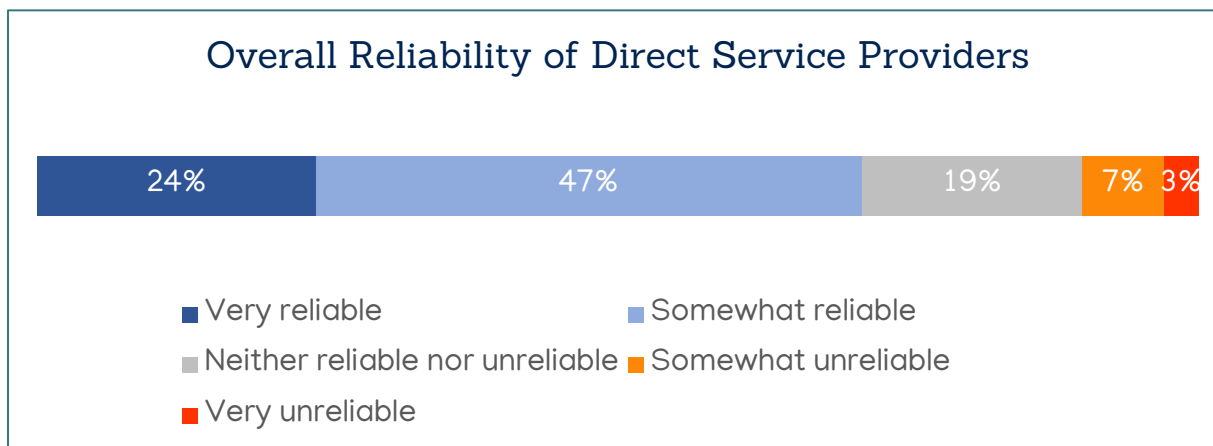
- 39%** Resident Service Coordinators
- 25%** Resident Service Supervisor/Manager
- 30%** Other





**49%** Of respondents report that their residents receive services from direct service providers, such as mental health services.





When identifying challenges related to working with direct service providers, resident service staff reported that direct service agencies are understaffed.

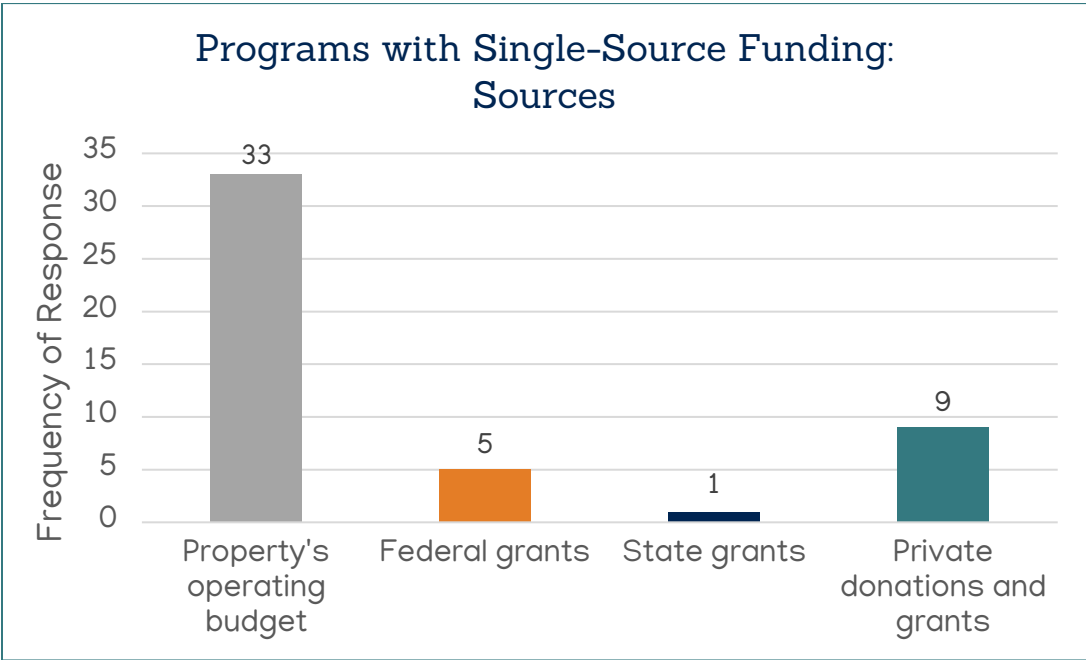
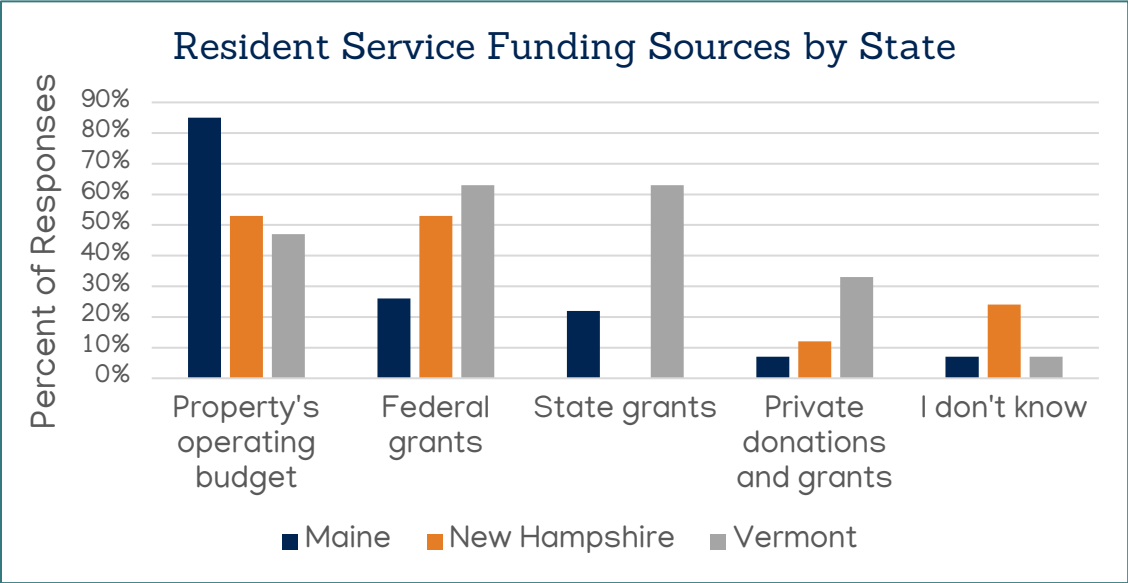
This was consistent across all three states.

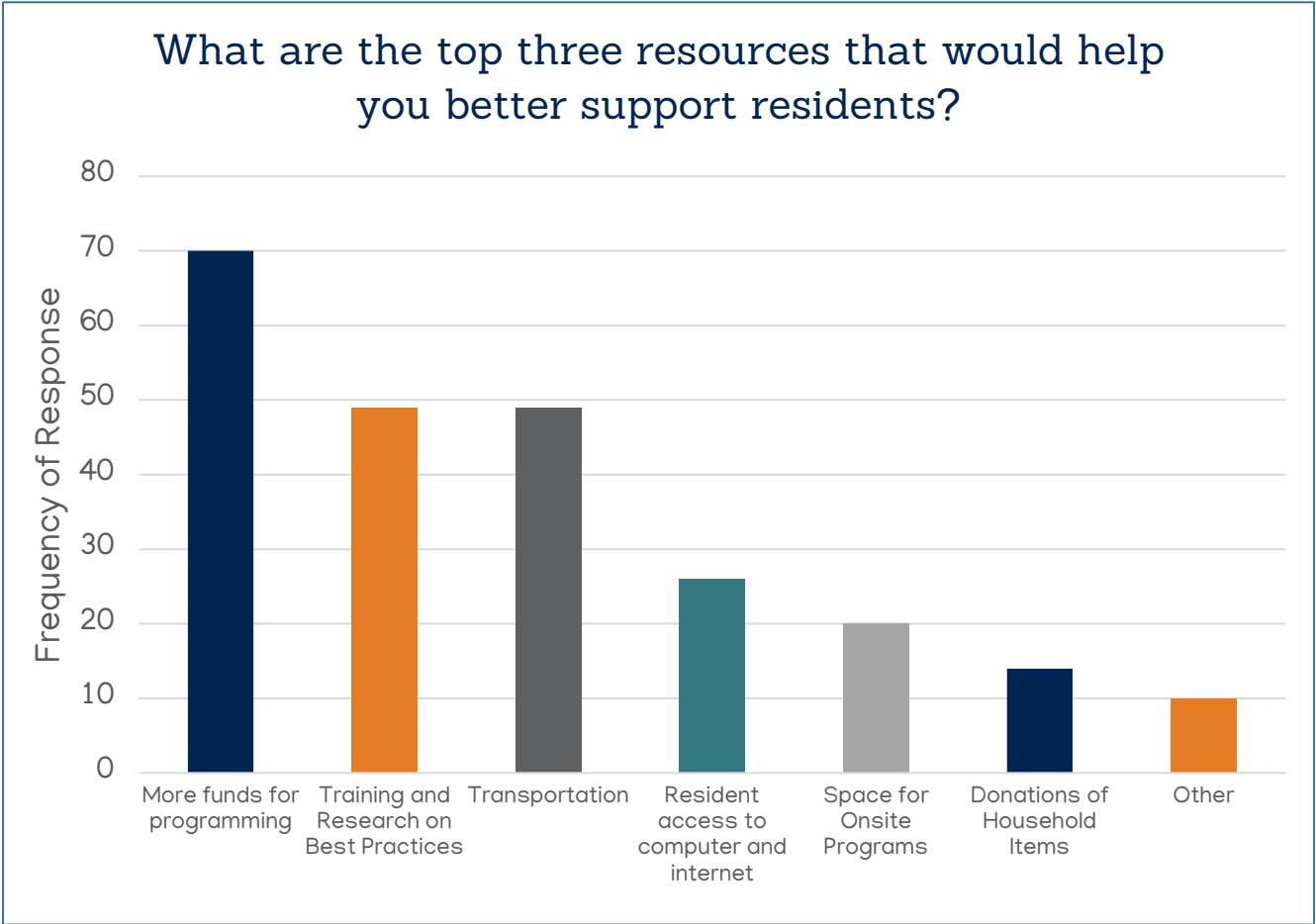
“I heard a [service provider staff] person say one day that they have like 400 staff vacancies. There’s a real staffing issue. So some of the folks that do some of that direct mental health work with [residents who] have the biggest challenges, they’re fairly, it’s the best term I can use, ‘green.’ And I think it’s really hard for them and hence hard for us because none of us have all the resources that we need. But we feel like we’re doing the best we can, I mean everybody is.”

“Many health service providers have had [an] employment problem with people turning over, not filling in changes and personnel.”

“[Direct service providers have] significant staffing issues which then leads to less support for our tenants, which then means there’s more mental health crises and instead of smaller check-ins I become a crisis response person.”

44% of respondents have resident service programs that utilize more than one source of funding.





### What programs would you like to see developed or expanded upon?

- 14 responses: Onsite mental health supports, including support groups
- 12 responses: Transportation initiatives
- 8 responses: Housekeeping/hoarding support
- 8 responses: Budgeting and money management



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Interviewees described a spectrum of funding needs. Some need more resident service staff, while others reported needing more funding for residents' specific needs. Those who work in programs with federal grant funding described very specific limitations on their services.

“We just need more funding for more people but we’re very grant-based so if we can’t find grants to fund a position then our hands are tied.”

“Funding-wise what we really need to work harder at is finding out ways to pay for stuff. Like move-outs. Cleaning, people who need their apartments cleaned out, or even just cleaned. We find stuff when we need to, we have an elderly person who is moving in and she doesn’t have a bed. We’re looking around our various budgets and stuff like that, it doesn’t really fit into anything, and then [a staff member] says ‘she’s 77 years old, she needs a bed’ and I’m like, ‘ok we’re going to get a bed. We’ll find it. We’ll find the money.’”

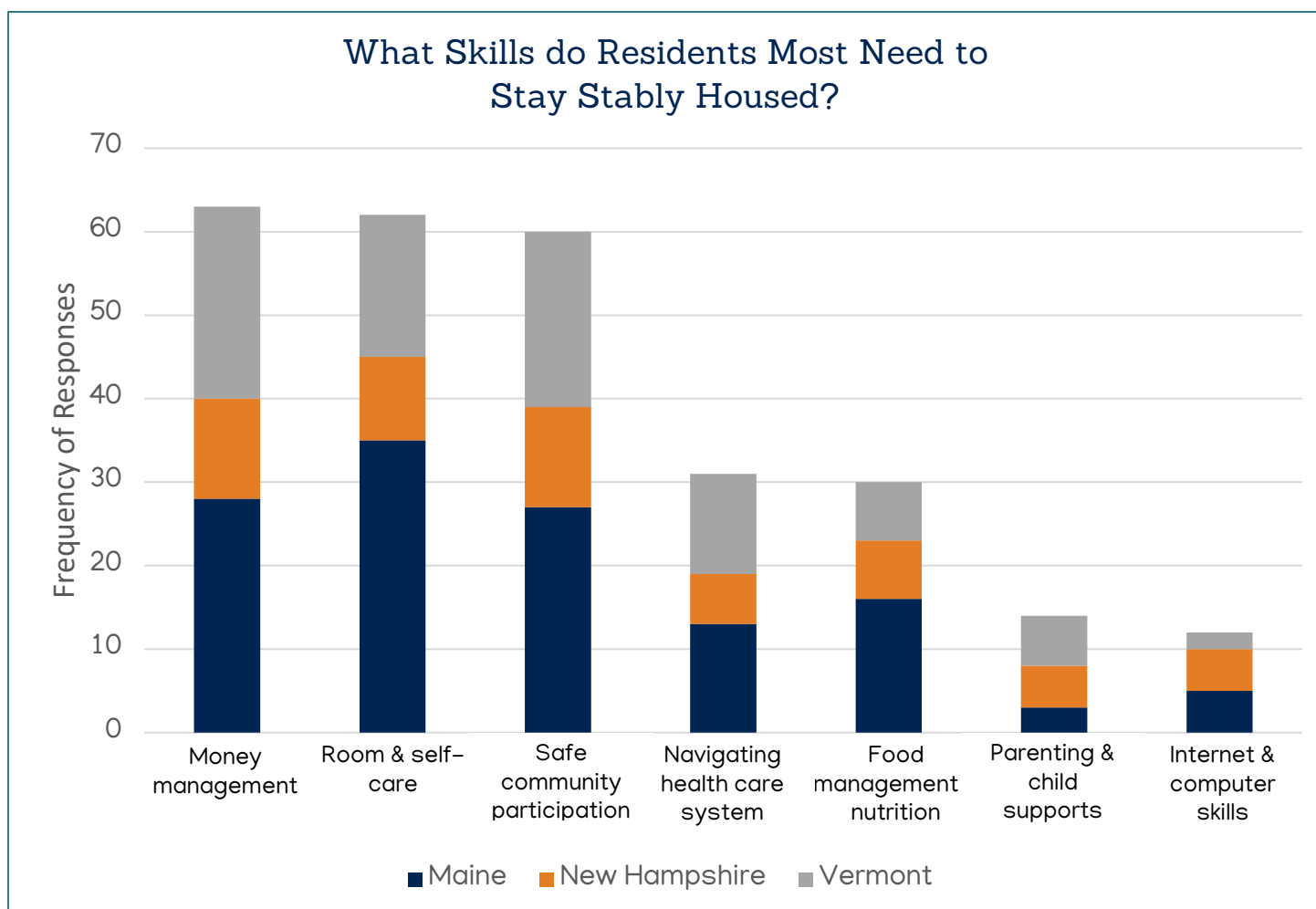
Transportation is also a major concern for residents, especially in rural areas.

“There’s no public transportation, there’s almost nothing for some of the rural areas.”

“Some people lose jobs because they don't have transportation, or they spend their entire tax return buying a new car, which only lasts for a year or two, and then they spend every penny they have repairing the car.”

“I've had single moms tell me that they can't get their kids to the dentist, doctor, dentist, grocery work, wherever they go, they just can't get there.”

“Quite a few people I talk to don’t have reliable transportation. Which is significantly difficult for so many reasons, [for example] if the food shelf or stores aren’t nearby then they have to really figure out how to get there.”



## Comments on the top three skill needs:

### Money management

“We're dealing with [an] older generation [that] has been taught to be self-sufficient. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps. Don't asked for help. Be strong. You can do this. And for them, it's a matter of pride. Sometimes it's a matter of shame. I can't think clearly enough to pay my own bills. So what we need to do as RSCs is provide a safe environment for them to be able to ask for what they need and by telling them, I see you struggle with this. Can I help you with that?”

“Money is private to a lot of people, and they already feel like they have to reveal half of their lives in order to get services. So, they don't necessarily want to talk specifics with me. That's one of the things I kind of have to really overcome...You can earn all the money you want, but if you don't know



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what to do with it, you're not going to get anywhere. That's often the focus of our meetings. And some people, they just don't want to talk to me about that because it's private and they don't want me knowing their business.”

## **Room & Self Care**

“So bad housekeeping can ruin a community because everyone’s now all paranoid about getting pests and stuff inside their house. It can ruin a tenant’s relationships with the other tenants if they already had a good standing and now suddenly their house is an absolute disaster, they’ve got cockroaches, they’ve got bedbugs, now no one wants them around.”

“[Housekeeping] is a significant issue. I think, if I had the stats in front of me, it’s got to be in the top 3 [reasons for referral]...We have yet to meet somebody whose housekeeping is bad or is living in squalor that’s simply lazy. There may be somebody out there, we haven’t met them yet.”

“It’s hard work but geez, is it worth it, when you see someone be able to stay at home. [We worked with one woman] and we would go together, because it was too much for one person to be alone in. And it took a couple months and then we had special cleaners come in and do the deep clean, and that woman is now thriving. It was just physically and mentally she couldn’t do it on her own. It just got too overwhelming, and then it just was kind of paralyzing so it just kept building and building. We were able to build a pretty trusting relationship and go at her pace and we’re checking in with her monthly, she’s still doing great, there’s really no significant issues. [We’ll] continue to do the monthly check-ins and slowly we’ll decrease it, so I would hope within the next year we’ll just do the normal annual check-ins but we can step back in if it starts getting bad. [She] was on the cusp of eviction unless we could get her in a certain space, and we were able to get her to pass inspection.”

## **Safe Community Participation**

“A lot of [residents] have the mindset, ‘don't get involved’ because I have had that happen...they feed the retaliation. If they get involved, if they report something, then they're going to be targeted...But then they isolate themselves, then they don't participate in [the community], and then they don't even want to go anywhere themselves.”

“If [the resident is] not feeling safe, if they feel like they're going to get evicted or they're having issues with their neighbors or things like that, it's a constant worry. It's a constant fear of everything. [instead, we'd like them to be] feeling like, okay, I'm in my home, this is secure, what is my next step towards self-sufficiency? Or where do I go from here?”



## In-Depth Interviews

We conducted nine in-depth interviews, three each in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Interviewees included both resident service coordinators (RSCs) and resident service managers.

Interviewees shared a few success stories from their programs:

“We’re working on stuff where people are one step away from eviction but we’re also working with people who are just saying ‘I don’t feel well. And I’d like to feel better.’ So we have the ability to do that. Or help them get the back rent paid off or get out of that conflict with a neighbor and then say, ‘now what do you want to do?’ And they’ll say ‘I want to go back to school, I want to find a job, I want to pursue my artwork,’ things like that. And so I think kind of generally we can rationally say that there’s a significant number of people that are doing better than they would have if we weren’t around. And that comes with some saves [prevented evictions] as well, and that’s what they pay us for, the saves, but it’s more than that.”

“[During the pandemic] we found that a substantial amount of our residents were food insecure. And so out of what felt like the woodwork, we had restaurants volunteering to cook meals twice a day and our staff would deliver. Hannaford’s really stepped up to the plate to provide weekly donations. Meals on Wheels found a variety of different ways to get food delivered. And so I would say, given that there’s been so much less food insecurity, these moments of [residents] being able to really engage much more with our staff because folks aren’t worried about food.”

We’ve created resources out of thin air...we have been able to find ways to meet the needs of the residents [through volunteers and creating community]. There were times when it was so hard to do it. And [one] of the things we did is, like, there was one lady who had some pretty serious mental illness and wasn’t nice to the people who brought her groceries to her, so they didn’t want to, so they’d buy them, bring them to me at the office, and I’d bring them to her. To her apartment. Yeah. And I’d be the one who delivered it, because I didn’t care if she wasn’t nice to me. That didn’t matter at all. So, you know, it was one of those things that...just had to be organized in a way. [We arranged it so that] the people doing it were comfortable and that she would get what she needed. We became a bigger community, and people really can depend on each other.”

Through analysis of our in-depth interviews, we also identified several themes. These themes are outlined below.

**Theme #1:**

By being on-site and building community, resident service programs fill critical gaps that cannot be filled by outside service providers.

**When RSCs are onsite they are in tune with the larger community; by interacting with people in their home environment, they catch problems that outside agencies may not be able to see.**

“I had a young woman where I used to work who gave away her piano. It's a little small one that you can lift, and I knew she loved it. And I was thinking on [it] and so I called her when I heard that, I said, ‘hey, I heard you gave away your piano.’ ‘Well, I'm not going to need it anymore.’ And I'm like, ‘why is that?’ Well, she was going to kill herself. That was the final answer. And so she was getting rid of the things that she liked, that she thought someone else would like. So I spent time with her. I called crisis, they were going to come. They didn't show up until 10pm that night. I called them around 9am in the morning. So I was doing crisis intervention with her from 9am ‘til 10pm and helping her understand, helping her make a commitment not to hurt herself, helping her understand there were things we could do to help with the problems she was having.”

“There was one gentleman who had all his counseling sessions on the phone, and he sounded good on the phone. He wasn't, and he was a mess, and things were not going well, and he was having all kinds of problems, but they didn't know it because they couldn't see him and talk to him and really understand what was happening. [We needed someone who could] see the person, be in their house, see what was going on. And you walk in the person's house, and every plug or crack was covered with tape. The toilet was closed and taped down, and the sinks were closed because this person was very paranoid. We would see it because we would go in.”

**Some residents need permanent, ongoing check-ins in order to stay housed.**

“It can be years before they get the support [from community agencies that] they need to stay home, which then provides this big gap, of either they stay living independently without the



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supports or they potentially go into a nursing home because they're not getting the supports they need, so resident services is trying to figure out how to sustainably bridge that gap.”

“So they assume, because it's independent living, that people can function independently. But the truth is, there's no place to go. If you need to go into some other kind of housing, it's almost impossible to find that.”

## Theme #2:

Community-building efforts create a sense of belonging, foster healthy interdependence with neighbors, and promote a sense of safety. This can be considered “upstream” eviction prevention, yet many do not have the funding or capacity to support it.

“I've noticed there's some really good community happening in our buildings but there's also a lot of gossip and ickiness with neighbors... And I think that in and of itself in these bigger apartments is safety. It's not necessarily physical safety, it's more like mental health safety...the more you gossip, the more I see the impact it really has on the whole community... And [we need to provide] more consistent support around that but we just don't have enough humans to do that.”

“One of the things that you're not supposed to do is you're not supposed to use [the grant money] for like a party or food or that type of thing, which is limiting. Even coffee and conversation, just coffee and half and half and cups and tea bags and cookies or muffins is something that think I could do more with.”

“There's no money...I've had other RSCs say that they were informed that the RSC budget is only for their training. I've heard other tenant RSCs mention that, ‘well, jeez, you know, we have a wish list’...[and the property owner would say] ‘that's a good idea, but how do you do it? Can you do fundraising?’”

“We have a really wonderful group of people who live together, and many of them have been willing to step up. [The outside service organizations] are running with such a short group of people that there's not enough [staff]. And so what we do is we have a couple of ladies who don't mind giving people a ride to the grocery store, to their doctor appointments. They don't mind going and getting their groceries for them if they need that. They don't mind doing their laundry for them. The blind man I was telling you about, one of the ladies who lives in our complex, actually does his cleaning for him now and his laundry. What we created was a community.”

## Theme #3:

Collaboration between resident service and property management staff can make or break the success of a program.

“If the property manager tells you ‘oh, by the way, they haven’t a paid rent for four months,’ it’s like, wow, how come I’m just be informed of now? Did I need to be informed in the first month? This could have been [managed] five months ago, if you would’ve brought it to my attention. Why have referrals if you’re never going to send them? Send a tenant to me. We don’t have access to [the information about rent payments].”

“I’m in the same office with two property managers and I work closely with the other two. So I’m often times...I wonder is there more wiggle room because I can speak directly to them and they trust that I’m doing the work and able to help and so they give me another extra month, because I’m working so hard at this and updating them regularly, so I think that is a benefit.”

## Summary of Greatest Needs and Suggested Actions

1. More funding is needed for resident services programs. Funding must be flexible enough to be used for a variety of purposes.
2. Increased on-site support for mental health is essential to help keep residents safe and housed.
3. More programs and resources for hoarding and squalor are needed to support residents’ housing stability.
4. Transportation can be a major barrier for residents; solutions to transportation issues would facilitate access to community services that are already in place.