



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Deval L. Patrick, Governor ♦ Timothy P. Murray, Lt. Governor ♦ Aaron Gornstein, Undersecretary

November 14, 2012

Dear Housing Authority Director:

I am writing to ask for your assistance as DHCD implements comprehensive reforms to the state's family homelessness system. The Patrick-Murray Administration is committed to improving the way in which the state responds to homelessness and the scarcity of affordable housing in Massachusetts and, with support from the Legislature, has enacted comprehensive reforms that are intended to prevent homelessness and provide alternatives for families who need shelter. Emergency Assistance (EA) and HomeBASE (shelter diversion and rapid re-housing benefit) are now available to families who are in emergency situations. Funding has also been increased for prevention and extremely low income housing programs including Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT), Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), and public housing.

The new system may necessitate that families seek or maintain low-cost or informal housing situations which can include families sharing apartments or living in doubled-up situations for a period of time. Housing authorities are natural partners in our reform effort and one way you can help is to give special consideration to families who are living temporarily doubled-up in state public housing. We ask that you give special consideration to related and un-related families living together and would encourage you to give even greater consideration for longer periods of time to allow domestic extended family members to stay as guests if doing so is likely to prevent homelessness.

Leases signed by tenants and housing authorities limit the time a guest can stay to 21 nights during any 12 month period unless the housing authority otherwise consents to a longer period for good cause. This means you can, at your discretion, grant guest privileges when the 21-day period does not adequately recognize the urgency of the situation.

In all cases, we leave decisions regarding individual tenancies to the housing authority. With your on-the-ground knowledge, you are best able to make decisions that are both compassionate and respect the safety and sustainability of your developments.

We realize that there are many issues and concerns about how this will impact your housing authority's community and the residents of your developments—and that we need to be both

compassionate and protective of the program we have all worked so hard to maintain. Through your communication with residents they will know of your willingness to give consideration, that a visit is a temporary stay, that they are responsible for the conduct of all household members and guests, and that we must still adhere to the State Sanitary Code.

If you have any questions, would like to discuss this matter or have suggestions about how DHCD can be helpful, please contact me or Chris Devore. Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lizbeth Heyer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lizbeth Heyer
Associate Director
Public Housing & Rental Assistance