

Administration Would End the Shelter Safety Net for Homeless Children with Nowhere Else to Go!

Say “No” to Shelter Denials, and “Yes” to Better Housing Assistance!

Under House 1, most homeless children and their parents with no other safe place to stay would be denied access to emergency shelter through the state’s Emergency Assistance (EA) program, funded through 7004-0101.

- Families who would be denied shelter include those who are homeless because they are members of families that are extremely poor, have lost jobs in the horrible economy, have lost their homes because of evictions due to foreclosure, or have previously fled a domestic violence situation.
- These families have no family or friends with whom to stay -- otherwise they would not currently be eligible for EA. The only families who could access shelter under the Administration’s proposal are those who are fleeing domestic violence in their current housing situation, headed by a young parent, or homeless due to a fire or natural disaster.

Homeless families denied shelter would be offered only temporary rental assistance and help looking for an apartment in which to use it. The proposal mandates shelter denials but not an immediate right to housing.

- Providing re-housing resources as quickly as possible is important, and this aspect of the proposal (7004-0108) can be useful, with some important revisions.
- But since it can take weeks or months to find a unit to rent -- even with subsidies much more valuable than what is being proposed here -- these children and their families would be left out in the cold while searching for housing.
- Families who receive any homelessness assistance would be barred from any other help for 2 full years even if they literally have no safe place to stay.

Barring families from shelter does not end homelessness!

Support new housing assistance, including homelessness prevention, but let homeless families stay in shelter until they are housed!

Fewer families will need shelter if better housing resources are available!

We can improve housing resources AND preserve access to emergency shelter for families who have no other place to stay!

For more information, contact Mass. Law Reform Institute 617-357-0700 (Ruth Bourquin x333 rbourquin@mlri.org or Deborah Harris x 313 dharris@mlri.org), Mass. Coalition for the Homeless 781-595-7570 (Kelly Turley x17 kelly@mahomeless.org), Family Economic Initiative 617-603-1626 (Elizabeth Toulan etoulan@gbls.org), or Mass. Alliance on Teen Pregnancy 617-482-9122 (Liz Peck epeck@massteenpregnancy.org).

Proposed House 1 language

Item 7004-0101

provided further, that notwithstanding any general or special law, or program regulation, to the contrary, (i) **those families that shall be eligible for assistance through a temporary emergency family shelter shall be only** (a) families that are at risk of domestic abuse in their current housing situation; and (b) families that, through no fault of their own, are homeless due to fire or natural disaster; and (ii) all families otherwise eligible for temporary emergency family shelter pursuant to departmental regulations, including those families otherwise eligible under (i) above, in which the head of household is not more than 21 years of age at the time of application for emergency assistance, shall be served only through a young families congregate housing program;

provided further, that benefits received under [section 30 of Chapter 23B](#) and/or the short-term housing transition program **shall render a family ineligible for emergency assistance and/or short-term housing transition benefits for a period of 24 months** from the later of the date upon which the family exits a temporary emergency family shelter or a short-term housing transition payment is made to or on behalf of the family;

Item 7004-0108 (proposed new)

provided, that the assistance provided hereunder may include payments of rent arrears; a portion of the household's monthly rent, first and/or last month's rent, and/or security deposit; utility charges; and extraordinary medical bills so long as such assistance will maintain housing for the family; provided further, that a family's eligibility for such assistance shall not exceed a period of 36 months, as a single, uninterrupted period of time or otherwise; provided further, that such payments shall not exceed \$8,000 for the initial 12 month period for which the family receives assistance hereunder, reduced by 5 per cent for each of the next 12 month periods for which the family receives assistance hereunder, such 12 month periods being a single uninterrupted period or otherwise; provided further, that the continued eligibility of the family shall be determined on an annual basis;

provided further, that assistance received under this program **shall render a family ineligible for benefits pursuant to [section 30 of chapter 23B](#) and short-term housing transition benefits for a period of 24 months** from the later of the date upon which the family exits a temporary emergency family shelter or a short-term housing transition payment is made to or on behalf of the family;