

# SUPPORT THE HOUSING FIRST MOVEMENT: Let's End Family Homelessness!

Please join us in supporting the Administration's plan to end family homelessness -line items  
7004-0101 and 7004-0108 in the Governor's House 1 Budget

Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness, Berkshire Housing Development Corporation, Community Teamwork Inc, Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries, Episcopal City Mission, Father Bill's and Mainspring, Franklin County Housing & Redevelopment Authority, HAP Housing, Heading Home Inc, Health Care for the Homeless - Mercy Medical Center, HomeStart Inc, Housing Assistance Corporation, Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance, Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, New England Farm Workers Council, One Family Inc, Regional Housing Network of Massachusetts, South Middlesex Opportunity Council, South Shore Housing Development Corporation, The Family To Family Project, United Way of Greater Plymouth County, United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, United Way of Tri-County, Valley Opportunity Council, Wellspring House Inc, Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness

***The current system is not working.  
Significant changes are needed.***

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It is unacceptable to have families languishing in motels and shelters for nearly a **year**

It is unacceptable for the state to spend nearly **\$160 million** on motels and shelters, not on housing solutions

It is unacceptable that there are currently over **2,000 families in shelters and over 1,000 families in motels** with no assurance for safe housing afterwards

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## Housing First Response

The Patrick-Murray Administration has proposed a plan to implement a Housing First solution to end family homelessness in the Commonwealth.

The reform plan reduces the emphasis on motels and shelters and increases the investment in flexible housing assistance. This proposal would decrease reliance on shelter and increase access to flexible homelessness prevention and housing stabilization resources.

**A step in the right direction!**

## The Human Cost of the Status Quo: Michelle's Story

**Isolated. Sick. Terrified. Depressed.** That is how Michelle felt living in a temporary motel room for the homeless, alone with her young son, pregnant with twins and separated from her husband. As months passed living in the motel room, Michelle's health deteriorated. She struggled to keep her son and herself healthy on a limited income, but there were rules against cooking in the room. Long walks to the nearest train led to early labor symptoms. Michelle believes that the stress of being in the motel caused her to deliver her twins prematurely. Her health, her wellbeing and her family suffered from the only option she had for support during a time in need.

Michelle is grateful that the state was able to provide her some assistance. At least she and her child had a roof over their heads. But, she says, "If I could have avoided going to the shelter, maybe things would have been different."

**Indeed, things could be different.** A string of bad luck—a high-risk pregnancy, a job loss, and a flea-infested apartment they could no longer afford—caused their homelessness, but the only assistance the state could offer was the motel. "My husband's pay wasn't enough for us to get a new apartment on our own. What we needed was help until I could get back on my feet. "

"Instead of living in the motel," Michelle says, "if that could have paid 18 months' rent or even less than that, by the time the subsidy ended we would have been able to pay our own rent. Why does it have to be so hard?" Michelle asks. "If they were going to pay that much for me to stay in a motel, why couldn't they put me in an apartment?"

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We strongly support the Administration's plan to reduce reliance on emergency shelters and increase investments in housing assistance. We understand that not every provision of the plan will satisfy all stakeholders and that improvements can be made. In fact, there is considerable support for improving the plan such as allowing regional flexibility relative to the housing assistance cap, customizing housing assistance and stabilization services, and supporting interim housing placements. We are confident the legislative and administrative process will be flexible enough to allow for thoughtful changes and not hinder final passage of the Administration's plan.

# Ending Family Homelessness: Emergency Assistance Reform Fact Sheet

The Patrick/Murray Administration's proposal to reform the state's response to family homelessness is contained in two line items in the FY 2012 House 1 Budget: **Emergency Assistance (7004-0101) and the Massachusetts Short Term Housing Transition Program (7004-0108)**

## Current Motel and Shelter Program

### The current Emergency Assistance (EA) Program:

- Currently shelters over **2000 families in emergency shelters and over 1000 families in motels**
- Funds motels and family shelters
- Funds limited transitional housing, short term rental assistance, and intermittent shelter diversion
- Does not provide assurance of services or housing assistance following a shelter stay
- Income eligibility = families with incomes at or below 115% of the federal poverty level

## Proposed Program

### Emergency Assistance (7004-0101) would fund:

#### 1. Young Families Program

- A congregate program for parents 21 years old and younger, with support services focused on self sufficiency and housing stability

#### 2. Emergency Shelter for Emergency Housing Crisis

- Prioritizing shelter for those who are homeless due to domestic violence and/or natural disasters

### Short Term Housing Transition Program (New Program - 7004-0108) would fund:

- Flexible diversion and housing stabilization program
- Up to three years of housing assistance for families with greater barriers to housing

Income eligibility for both programs = families with incomes at or below 115% of the federal poverty level

State Spending On Motels and Shelters			Proposed Budget for Short Term Housing Transition Program	
Fiscal Year	EA Budgeted Amount	Actual EA Expenditure	Fiscal Year	Budgeted Amount
2009	\$87.2 Million	\$114 Million	2009	\$0
2010	\$91.6 Million	\$151 Million	2010	\$ 0
2011	\$115.4 Million	\$159 Million to date	2011	\$ 0
2012	<b>\$97.8 Million</b>		2012	<b>\$38.6 Million</b>