

# Basic Housing Search Info

## General Tips to Remember When Helping Families:

- Due to the current high cost of housing and moving, encourage families to stay where they are if at all possible - if they can work out an agreement (see \*\*). Encourage families to not 'burn bridges' where they are currently living by not paying rent, etc – even if there are code violations. Leaving a unit without court process can make them ineligible for emergency shelter!! Call CMHA for housing counseling/tenant responsibility info.

\*\*Any tenants who are having trouble with their landlords such as failure to make repairs or who would like legal help in working out an arrangement should call the MA Justice Project at 888-427-8989 or LACCM 800-649-3718.

- Be honest with families about waiting lists – don't send somewhere if not sure site has openings. Don't set false expectations.
- Have families/individuals call first!!!! Don't have them do leg work of visiting housing sites to fill out applications unless their waiting lists are open. The Central MA Housing Alliance has listing of all affordable housing sites (call 757-2150 and leave name and address) along with MassHousing.com.
- Send DTA income eligible families (130% of poverty level or below) **first** to DTA office to get referral for emergency assistance services including housing services which includes the Housing Assistance Program (HAP) – not CMHA.
- Few agencies offer actual housing search assistance for families. Key is to equip families with information to do search on their own.
- When Looking in the newspaper: Some cheaper apartments are coming on line in the city. It is **best for folks to look in the Sunday T&G** and **call first thing. Get out to see the apartment ASAP.**
- If a housing waiting list is open, even if it is long – encourage folks to get on it!!! May not take as long & can make it easier to advocate for apartment at that site later on if need for housing becomes critical.
- Families/Individuals cannot be discriminated against / turned away from housing due to **race, ethnicity, family status, receipt of section 8 or TAFDC or other benefits.** If this is suspected, have the family contact the Fair Housing Project at LACCM IMMEDIATELY: 800-649-3718 or 508-752-3722 x3004 ask for Carla Halpern.

## If a Family is Homeless:

- Low income families **may be eligible for shelter benefits through the MA Department of Transitional Assistance**, whether or not they are receiving TAFDC benefits. Families must verify eligibility for the Emergency Assistance Program (EA). Anyone who wishes may apply at the DTA Office at 9 Walnut St., Worcester. / (508)767-3100

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\*\*If family turns down a shelter opening or is kicked out, they may jeopardize their ability to apply for shelter assistance from the DTA again until another 12 months has passed!!!

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**Eligibility for DTA Temporary Emergency Shelter Assistance (EA):** Must be eligible for emergency assistance (EA) which includes housing services

- For families with children (under the age of 19) or pregnant women at or below 125% of the federal poverty level. The asset limit = \$2500
  - Head of household, their child, or another member of their family must be a US citizen or eligible non citizen. NOTE: as long as there is at least one family member who is a citizen or eligible non citizen (non citizens whose immigration status has been approved for particular benefits), all immediate family members are allowed to get emergency assistance
  - For families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, with no friends or family members who can take them in.
- AND they need shelter for one of the following reasons:
    1. They are victims of a natural disaster and must move
    2. They are being evicted and your landlord will not renew their lease
    3. Their current housing is a threat to the health or safety of the family (overcrowded, unsanitary, etc.)
    4. A family member has been mistreated or abused in the current housing
    5. a family member has a severe medical condition that makes it necessary for you to move

NOTE: If a family living "doubled up" with another family, they will not be eligible for emergency shelter unless your living situation is a threat to your family for one of the above reasons (overcrowded, abuse, or other health or safety problems).

### A family is not eligible for temporary emergency shelter if:

- They became homeless for the purpose of becoming eligible for EA or another housing assistance program,
- They were evicted from public or subsidized housing for non-payment of rent,
- They were evicted from housing because a family member took part in criminal activity or destroyed property and they do not appear in court without good cause
- If someone quits their job, reduces hours or does not take a job for no good cause prior to applying
- OR they became homeless because they didn't cooperate with housing assistance program services.

- **NOTE:** Families can access EA only once in a 12 month period.

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- Families **who are not eligible for DTA funded shelter can contact Friendly House (755-4362) or Central MA Housing Alliance (791-7265) re. available community beds** (not requiring welfare referral). Catholic Charities (860-2249) has a community bed for families that have working parents).

**The Worcester Interfaith Hospitality Network** is another great resource for low - income families who are not eligible for DTA funded shelter. Through this program, homeless families are housed at various local churches. Contact Joanne Marhefka at 508-798-6732

In a real pinch, **the Catholic Worker House** on 52 Mason Street has a few beds available for very temporary stays: 508-753-3588.

**Abby's House:** In addition to providing emergency overnight shelter for battered and homeless women, with or without children, they offer long term housing: 16 single rooms for women and a few 2 bedroom apartments for women and children at very moderate rents. A DTA referral is not needed. Contact 756-5486 to apply or stop in at the office at 52 High Street in Worcester.

## **Victims of Domestic Violence:**

**Daybreak Resources:** A program of the YWCA of Central MA that provides immediate shelter to individual women with children who are fleeing danger. 24 hour hotline = 508-755-9030. **Note:** For safety purposes: Worcester area women will be referred to Massachusetts SAFELINK which will connect them with a shelter out of the area.

### **SafeLink Statewide Hotline: 1-877-785-2020**

- A 24-hour live response in English, Spanish, and TTY
- Translation in 140 languages;
- Crisis intervention, safety planning, support, information and referrals;
- Access to emergency shelter statewide;
- A link to the services of Casa Myrna Vazquez

**SSTAP Program:** A program of RCAP Solutions that provides a longer term (18-24 months) housing program for women victims of domestic violence. Must be women with children. There is no income eligibility. Contact 800-488-1969 x6674 or x6673. Referrals needed from DSS, DTA or shelter.

Additional Note: If applying to a local housing authority, victims of domestic violence can get preference but must provide proof; i.e. criminal/court records.

Help available from the

## **Central MA Housing Alliance (CMHA):**

7-11 Bellevue Street, Worcester / 508-791-7265

**[www.cmhaonline.org](http://www.cmhaonline.org)**

- The primary place for people to call to find out about their rights as tenants and landlords and inquire re. housing.
- Can provide agencies/families with a listing of local shelters.
- **They have a list of subsidized apartment complexes in the city** (that rent on a sliding fee scale - even for people without section 8's - call 757-2150 and leave name and address to receive listing) They also have a listing of SRO's (single room occupancies) for single individuals – these tend to be more affordable
- Prints up weekly listing of available apartments in Worcester & surrounding towns – (must come to CMHA to pick up)
- The agency prefers that families come to their walk-in Housing Counseling Hours: Monday 1-3, Wednesday 9-11, Thursday 5-7pm and Friday 1-3:30pm

## **The Housing Assistance Program (HAP) of the Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance:**

If a family is eligible for Emergency Assistance they can ask their DTA worker to refer them to the **Housing Assistance Program**. Via this program, they will get one-on-one assistance searching for an apt. They need a referral from their DTA worker.

- Must have income under 130% of federal poverty level
- CMHA is the Housing Assistance Program provider but a family must **first** get referral from DTA to access program – don't send families to CMHA first

Housing available through the

**Worcester Housing Authority:** 40 Belmont Street, Worcester / 508-635-3300

- Families and individuals can apply to the Worcester Housing Authority for public and/or leased housing. Public housing apartments are located in Great Brook Valley Gardens, Lakeside Apartments, and other various sites. Leased housing consists of project-based and mobile vouchers.
- Families and individuals are encouraged to contact the WHA for information on program availability. Applications are available at the Admissions Department, 40 Belmont Street. Depending on the program the applicant applies for, the wait time may be from 3 months to 2 years or more. Families/Individuals **MUST APPLY IN PERSON**.
- If a family or individual will be or is displaced due to no fault of their own, the WHA will give priority if the necessary documentation to support the request for emergency housing.

Please note that it will still take time to get an apartment. **Contact the WHA for further information at 508-635-3300.**

**Note:** If evicted from a housing authority owning \$, it is very hard to find new subsidized **or** affordable placement. The family may not have option to repay the funds later to obtain new unit.

**Also:** Make sure families submit complete applications!! Must provide copies of social security cards, birth certificates, proof of income (4 week pay stubs or letter of federal assistance benefits (of all household members)

**Privately owned subsidized housing:** is affordable privately owned rental housing set aside for low and moderate-income families and individuals, elders, and the disabled. Examples include Plumley Village, Lincoln Village, the Wellington apartments, etc. The government pays a subsidy (money) to the private owner, and in return, the owner charges low rents for the subsidized apartments.

- **To obtain a list of subsidized apartment complexes in Worcester County** (that rent on a sliding fee scale - even for people without section 8's) - call CMHA at 508-757-2150 and leave name and address to receive a listing).
- Each site must be applied to separately.
- **Call first!!** Don't do leg work of visiting housing sites to fill out applications unless their waiting lists are open

**Section 8 Vouchers:** and the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) offer tenant-based vouchers to help low-income families and individuals pay their rent.

- Tenant based vouchers are mobile – can get from any housing authority or state funded agency that provides section 8 and use in any apartment that meets program requirements in the state anywhere in the state.
- The WHA is currently participating in the Section 8 Centralized Waiting List administered by MassNahro. Anyone who is interested in submitting a pre-application to the Centralized Waiting List may do so at any of the participating housing authorities throughout the state. Once any of the housing authorities is ready to offer vouchers, the specific housing authority will draw names from the Centralized Waiting List database.
- NOTE: Some housing authorities do not participate in the centralized waiting list and should be called directly to find out if they have open waiting lists for section 8 vouchers.  
Obtain listing of statewide housing authorities by contacting CMHA at 757-2150 and leave name & address info.

**Housing Discrimination:** Families/Individuals cannot be discriminated against / turned away from housing due to **race, ethnicity, family status, receipt of section 8 or TAFDC or**

**other benefits.** If this is suspected, have the family contact the Fair Housing Project at LACCM IMMEDIATELY: 800-649-3718 or 508-752-3722 x3004 ask for Carla Halpern.

**NOTE:** Families who are turned away from housing because of lead paint or because they ask to have an apartment de-lead should also call LACCM at the number listed above. (Particularly families with children under 6)

**Emergency Housing Funds:** To assist with rent arrears, security deposits, etc. but can't touch large amounts. These funds are made available off and on during the year and get used up quickly. Families in need are encouraged to contact them earlier vs. later.

Contact

The Central MA Housing Alliance (508-791-7265),

Friendly House (508-755-4362)

Catholic Charities (508-860-2249)

Willis Center (508-852-8944)

**Tool Box Program of DTA:** Limited funding to help people move from shelter to affordable housing. No homelessness prevention funds at this time. Must be eligible for & participate in HAP program to apply. Contact CMHA: 508-791-7265

**RAFT funds:** Residential Assistance to Families in Transition program – WILL BE AVAILBLE SOMETIME IN AUGUST 06' – watch for announcements in newspaper.

- Administered through RCAP Solutions. 800-488-1969, ext. 6771.
- The local Worcester office is located at: 470 Pleasant Street Worcester, MA 01609; the phone number there is: 508-792-5230
  
- This program is open only to families (with dependent children or with a member of the household who is disabled) with incomes; the family's rent can not exceed more than 50% of what their gross monthly income is. Income eligibility varies per region of the state. For further information contact RCAP directly.
  
- ONE TIME funds – RAFT funds can only be accessed one time.

## Single Individuals:

**HOAP (Homeless Outreach and Advocacy Project) Programs of Community Healthlink:** For unaccompanied single individuals who are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness who may also have a disability. HOAP is a federally funded Healthcare for the Homeless Program that provides primary healthcare, mental health and substance abuse, case management and housing services, primarily for single adults.

HOAP also provides supportive housing services to a small number of families with disabilities such as HIV. Homeless individuals do not need insurance in order to qualify for services. HOAP also provides Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP) services to individuals and families in conjunction with the Worcester Housing Court, who are facing eviction due to lease violations. Referrals for TPP services must come directly through the Housing Court.

72 Jaques Avenue  
Worcester, MA 01610  
508-860-1080

The Central MA Housing Alliance also has a **listing of local SRO's – Single Room Occupancies** for single individuals which tend to be more affordable. Contact 508-791-7265.

## Programs for Homeless Adolescents:

Shelters and transitional housing programs for runaway and homeless adolescents provide emergency housing and support services for youths who cannot live at home and need help. A DTA referral is not necessary, though most require DSS involvement. These programs offer a variety of services ranging from counseling and education to structured treatment programs for youths with histories of severe problems.

- **Eligibility requirements** for shelters and transitional housing programs for adolescents vary. Some only serve youths involved with the Department of Social Services, while others are open to all youths in need of shelter. See the program listings below for more information.

### Transitional housing programs for adolescents in the Worcester area

- **Carol A. Schmidt Village**

979 Millbury Street  
Worcester, MA 01607  
Telephone: 508-757-5579  
Office hours: 24 hours a day, every day of the year

**Eligibility:** Homeless or runaway youths, males or females, ages 7 to 17

Referral: Self-referral or referral by the Department of Social Services, the court, or the police  
Transportation: Provided

- **The Morin House  
YOU, Inc.**

117 Wheelock Avenue  
Millbury, MA 01527      Telephone: 508-757-8449

**Eligibility:** Adolescent girls, age 16 to 22, involved with the Department of Social Services

Fee: Monthly fee based on take home pay

**For additional information** on shelters, transitional housing programs, and other support services for runaway and homeless adolescents, you should call YouthNet at Friendly House or YOU, Inc.:

**YouthNet Worcester**

**Friendly House :** 36 Wall Street  
Worcester, MA 01604 Telephone: 508-755-4362  
Office hours: Monday through Friday, 6 PM to 9 PM

**Youth Opportunity Upheld (YOU, Inc.):** 81 Plantation Street  
Worcester, MA 01604 Telephone: 1-800-435-9990 (client) or 508-849-5600

**Worcester Youth Center :** 326 Chandler Street  
Worcester, MA 01609  
Telephone: 508-791-4702

## Housing Mediation Services:

Worcester Community Action Council has a Housing Mediation Program for families/individuals who need help working out disagreements with their landlords (when both parties are willing to sit down and talk). (754-1176 x 138, Carol Balderelli).

## Additional Resources:

Local Community Development Corporations occasionally have affordable apartments they rent out (eligibility criteria varies per agency – must contact each individually)

- Main South CDC: 875 Main Street, 752-6181
- Worcester Community Housing Resources: 11 Pleasant Street , Suite 300; Liz Murphy, 799-0322
- Worcester Common Ground 7-11 Bellevue St, 508-754-0908
- Oak Hill CDC 74 Providence Street. 508-754-2858

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