



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
600 Washington Street • Boston, MA 02111


DEVAL L. PATRICK
Governor

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
Lieutenant Governor

JUDYANN BIGBY, M.D.
Secretary

JULIA E. KEHOE
Commissioner

Field Operations Memo 2008-69
December 2, 2008

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From:  John Augeri, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: EA - Interagency Housing Solution Team Command Center (HSTCC)

Overview

The Interagency Housing Solution Team Command Center (HSTCC) has been established to address the increase in EA hotel/motel placements. Representatives from the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Department of Transitional Assistance are working together to expedite housing opportunities for families in shelter and hotels/motels. The goal of this team is to eliminate the need for hotel/motels as temporary shelter placements. The Department of Children and Families will participate as needed and the Department of Mental Health has offered to coordinate mental health service assessments for our families when necessary.

See Attachment A for a more detailed description of the Command Center. TAO Managers and case management staff may be contacted by shelters and housing assistance providers (HAP) to provide assistance. Please share with them any and all resources available to support this initiative. TAO Managers should contact their Regional Directors for implementation details.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline.

**Interagency Housing Solution Team
Command Center
November 24, 2008**

Overview:

The Commonwealth will address, with urgency, the rise in homeless families – both those temporarily staying in motels and those in shelters. By implementing an interagency housing solutions command center we will take immediate action to eliminate the use of hotels and motels as a temporary shelter option. While the lack of affordable housing persists, there still is a need for a concerted interagency and external response which must include state agencies, housing search and shelter providers and housing entities to ensure that all available housing is being accessed and housing placements for families living in shelter are happening as expeditiously as possible.

Drawing from the Commonwealth's prior experience in eliminating hotel/motel usage in the 1990's and early 2000's, housing Katrina evacuees, and the present success of the six local Housing Solution Teams in coordinating local re-housing efforts, establishing a temporary statewide coordinating entity charged with tracking and directing the re-housing efforts of shelter families will achieve the goal of eliminating the state's reliance on hotels and motels.

Housing Solution Team Command Center (HSTCC)

The Housing Solution Team Command Center (HSTCC) will be the statewide entity that would act as both a clearinghouse for housing information and opportunities as well as to have oversight responsibilities for directing the re-housing efforts of housing search providers. The HSTCC will work closely with housing search and shelter providers, local housing authorities, regional non-profits and private management companies to ensure that housing opportunities are not being missed and placements are being made as quickly as possible.

The HSTCC will engage in very-targeted activities to carry out its mission that would include:

- Building and utilizing a centralized data base that incorporates a tier approach
- Conducting triage of current shelter cases to identify the best housing strategy that will lead to shelter exits and appropriate housing
- Following-up on housing applications and waiting list status
- Matching families with the right housing resources including stabilization and case management upon placement
- Tracking and follow-up on shelter non-compliance efforts

- Coordinating and disseminating housing opportunities and information to housing search providers
- Ensuring timely and aggressive follow up of housing opportunities
- Confirming placement and assignment of stabilization services

The HSTCC will support the housing search and shelter providers' placement efforts by obtaining critical housing information from housing agencies on applications and waiting list status which will help determine realistic housing options. By working directly with providers to aggressively target applications where families have the highest likelihood of being deemed eligible for housing, the HSTCC will help reduce the number of untenable applications being submitted to housing agencies. This will result in eligible families getting housed more quickly.

Implementation:

The HSTCC will open on November 24, 2008 located at DHCD at 100 Cambridge Street, fourth floor. One large room will be equipped with phones and computers.

The Command Center will be staffed by a team comprised of DHCD and DTA. DCF will participate as needed and DMH has offered liaisons for mental health service assessments as needed.

The Command Center will work with the Director of the Interagency Council for Housing and Homelessness in planning daily operations and the short term work plan. The Command Center will report activities to the DHCD/DTA Housing and Homeless "cabinet" that meets weekly.

Staffing will consist of personnel that have extensive knowledge of the housing delivery system as well as staff who are knowledgeable of DTA's EA regulation, the HAP delivery system and housing resources – both public and private. The HSTCC will provide quick access to as many housing resources and placement tools as possible and will require agencies both on the state and local level to be as flexible as possible.