



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


MITT ROMNEY
Governor

RONALD PRESTON
Secretary

KERRY HEALEY
Lieutenant Governor

JOHN A. WAGNER
Commissioner

Field Operations Memo 2005-25
June 7, 2005

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From:  Cescia Derderian, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: Local Housing Authority Transitional Housing Program II: Renewal and Expansion of LHATHP.

Overview

The Department, in collaboration with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), has renewed and expanded the Local Housing Authority Placement Program under the name *Local Housing Authority Transitional Housing Program II (LHATHP II)*. Eligible families may participate in this shelter program for six to twelve months. At the end of this period, each family may assume tenancy of their unit or of another unit at the LHA site.

Purpose of Memo

The purpose of this memo is to review the *LHATHP II* program and advise ICMs, AU Managers, and Homeless Coordinators how to identify eligible EA families for participation. Staff at TAOs serving Brookline, Fitchburg, Springfield, Weymouth, Attleboro, Worcester, Taunton, Woburn, and Lowell should begin identifying families for referral to the program.

This memo discusses *LHATHP II* and criteria for the identification and referral of families to it.

**Program
Description**

The LHAs currently accepting families under *LHATHP II* are Brookline, Fitchburg, Springfield, Weymouth, Attleboro, Worcester, Taunton, Woburn, and Lowell. DHCD is also working with other LHAs to expand the program. Each participating LHA will set aside approximately 10 units for *LHATHP II* during FY'05. **Updates to this memo will be sent to the TAOs as more LHAs become ready to accept EA families.**

- *LHATHP II* provides housing at no cost to the family for a period of six to twelve months.
 - A family may participate in *LHATHP II* for a period of six to twelve months or until they are ready for LHA tenancy, whichever comes first, unless the family leaves the program for other permanent housing or the family's EA shelter benefits are terminated prior to that time.
 - When the family is determined ready for tenancy, the family will assume responsibility for the full rent, i.e., 32 percent of their income, either for the apartment they currently occupy or another unit at the local housing authority.
 - A family that signs a lease for a unit will have their EA benefits terminated due to feasible alternative housing.
 - A family that is selected to participate in this program by both the LHA and/or DTA and refuses to participate will be subject to the same regulation as if the family refused shelter placement. Refusal to participate will result in EA termination.
 - The ICM, AU Manager or Homeless Coordinator and an LHA Case Manager will work with the family to prepare to assume responsibility for the unit in a short period of time, to offer guidance to the family, resolve any issues, and update the Self Sufficiency Plan. DTA will provide necessary support services: child-care services if the adult is working or in a training program (through the ESP program for TAFDC AUs or the Homeless Child-Care Service program), transportation services for the adult if employed (through the Access to Jobs Program) and referrals to other agencies, as needed.
-

**Criteria for
Participation in
LHATHP II**

Families must meet the following statewide criteria to be considered for *LHATHP II*:

- The family must have an adult member who DTA has determined would be an appropriate participant in *LHATHP II* based upon the following:
 - Must have a steady monthly income that includes receipt of federal and/or state benefits, RSDI, SSI, child support, UC, and/or veteran's benefits;
 - Is employed; or,
 - Is participating in an education or training program.
 - The family must need services including, but not limited to:
 - Daily living, parenting, tenancy, interpersonal, communication, or problem-solving skills development;
 - Counseling or peer support group;
 - Educational or job training;
 - Employment search;
 - Child-care;
 - Transportation; or,
 - Medical/psychological/educational assessments.
 - While in shelter, the ICM, AU Manager, or Homeless Coordinator, in cooperation with the HAP provider, must assess the family, utilizing the Self-Sufficiency Plan. This assessment must include:
 - The family's readiness to assume responsibility for rent;
 - Prior LHA history;
 - CORI check;
 - Credit check;
 - Prior landlord history;
 - Services currently needed; and,
 - A reassessment of services already in place, such as child care, transportation, counseling, etc.
-

**Criteria for
Participation in
LHATHP II
(continued)**

There are certain issues that the LHA might view as potential program ineligibility/disqualification issues. The ICM, AU Manager, or Homeless Coordinator must take these into consideration before recommending the family to the LHA director/designee. These issues are based on past housing infractions that, if repeated, would interfere with the rights of or threaten the health and/or safety of other tenants, LHA employees, or the housing unit.

Although previous housing infractions do not necessarily prevent participation in *LHATHP II*, the ICM, AU Manager, or Homeless Coordinator should review the EA record to become familiar with any past housing infractions. Such issues should be discussed with the TAO Director. The LHA will assess any ineligibility/disqualification issues to determine appropriate referrals for the family. If the ICM, AU Manager, or Homeless Coordinator is aware of these issues before the initial case conference, steps can be taken to either resolve the issues or not refer the family to *LHATHP II*. The LHA should consider:

- The severity of the issue;
- How long it has been since the issue occurred;
- The degree of danger to the health, safety, and security of others, their property, or the housing development and its common areas in case of recurrence;
- The disruption and inconvenience any recurrence might cause the LHA; and
- The likelihood that the family's behavior will be substantially improved.

In determining appropriate referrals, the LHA will consider:

- Intention not to occupy public housing as a primary residence;
 - Drug use by any family member within the previous 12 months;
 - Substantial interference with the rights of other tenants or LHA employees if previous disruptive behavior is repeated;
 - Poor housekeeping at a prior residence that would pose a substantial threat to the health or safety of the tenant or others if repeated;
 - A record of criminal activity that would interfere with or threaten the rights of other tenants or LHA employees or the LHA common areas if repeated;
-

Criteria for Participation in LHATHP II (continued)

- A history of nonpayment of rent, excluding those who paid at least 50 percent of their monthly income for rent each month during a tenancy but were unable to pay in full; an eviction for nonpayment of the balance shall not disqualify an individual or family from public housing;
- Failure to provide information reasonably necessary for the LHA to process the application;
- A history of failure to meet material lease terms at one or more prior residences;
- Failure to show as unintentional any misrepresentation or falsification of information on a prior LHA application within the previous three years; and,
- Abusive or threatening behavior towards an LHA employee during the application process or within the previous three years.

Identifying and Referring Families to LHATHP II

- The TAO should work to identify candidates for *LHATHP II* based upon the above criteria.
- To participate in this initiative, LHAs should inform the TAO director or designee immediately upon a unit vacancy.
- The TAO director/designee will then recommend a candidate, if possible.
- If no suitable candidate is found, the TAO director/designee should approach TAO offices in neighboring communities for possible candidates.

Homeless Coordinator/AU Manager Responsibilities: EA Asset Limit and BEACON

The eligibility countable asset limit does not apply to families who are participating in LHATHP II. A future BEACON increment will automate this exemption. Until this new functionality exists, the Homeless Coordinator/AU Manager must enter “0” (zero) for EA when updating the Countable Amounts tab of any window in the Assessed Person Statement workflow.

Note: The eligibility countable asset limit still applies to Food Stamp and TAFDC requirements; so, these entries must still be made when updating the Countable Amounts tab. Also, although assets are not countable for EA, families must still provide all income and asset verifications.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478.
