



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Deval L. Patrick, Governor ♦ Timothy P. Murray, Lt. Governor ♦ Gregory Bialecki, Secretary, EOHEd

**HomeBASE Program
Notice 2011-06 - REVISED**

To: HomeBASE Administering Agencies
From: Lizbeth Heyer, Associate Director, Division of Public Housing & Rental Assistance
Robert Pulster, Associate Director, Division of Housing Stabilization
Subject: Suspension of HomeBASE Rental Assistance at the Front Door – REVISED
Date: November 10, 2011

The desire to access HomeBASE resources, in particular the rental assistance benefit, has created an unanticipated demand at the front door of the Emergency Assistance (EA) system. While we believe we have provided much needed assistance to many imminently at-risk and homeless households, we cannot continue to provide the same level of assistance throughout this fiscal year. **Effective immediately and retroactive to Friday, October 28th, 2011, the rental assistance benefit provided under HomeBASE will no longer be available to the following households:**

- New households who started an application for Emergency Assistance after October 28th (unless the household was already re-housed in a rental apartment on or before November 4, 2011.)
- Families that have an EA application in process that was not completed on or prior to October 28th (unless the household was already re-housed in a rental apartment on or before November 4, 2011.)
- Families that were approved for EA and did not receive an approval for a HomeBASE Rental Assistance benefit as documented on the HomeBASE Daily Tally sheets on or prior to October 28, unless in a temporary accommodations unit or already re-housed in a rental apartment on or before November 4, 2011.
- EA applicants who were denied on or before October 28th and whose decision is overturned on appeal.

As of October 28th, the only HomeBASE benefit that will be available for new families applying for EA and HomeBASE will be Household Assistance. This benefit shall be used in accordance with HomeBASE regulations. The benefit cannot exceed \$4000 in a 12 month period.

To clarify the above impact of this suspension on HomeBASE applicants described above and in this notice please see the attached *Impact of HomeBASE Rental Assistance Suspension on EA Applicants* chart that provides a simple way of determining who is affected by this change.

Below please find some important timing clarifications and procedures that both homeless coordinators and HomeBASE providers need to be aware of:

- EA families with a head of household who has not yet reached his/her 21st birthday **still** can only access EA homeless shelters.
- EA families who are homeless due to domestic violence, fire, or natural disasters can access HomeBASE household assistance if they apply for EA after October 28th, but they cannot be required to accept HomeBASE household assistance, even if it is determined likely that it would be sufficient to sustain their housing for the next 12 months, if they would rather accept a placement in an EA homeless shelter or motel.
- Households with a head of household 21 or over that apply/ied for EA after October 28th who are homeless due to being asked to leave, residing in an overcrowded situation, eviction for non-payment, or medical issues should continue to be referred to HomeBASE for an assessment.
- Households at the front door will be given the option to be referred to HomeBASE to be assessed for Household Assistance.
- If initial assessment indicates that Household Assistance is not viable to sustain the family's housing for the next 12 months and/or the family chooses to enter EA shelter, the family will be referred back to the homeless coordinator for an EA homeless shelter placement.
- HomeBASE Temporary Accommodation Placement (TAP) should only be used if the household is approved for Household Assistance and has no place to sleep that night. If a TAP unit is not available, the family will be placed in EA shelter if it is unable to obtain safe overnight shelter. As with all families entering the EA homeless shelter system after October 28th, 2011, the Household Assistance benefit will no longer be available to these families after they have entered an EA homeless shelter.
- Families that are in EA shelters and hotels as of October 28, 2011, are **not** affected by the suspension of HomeBASE Rental Assistance benefit.
- Families placed in HomeBASE on a conditional basis, with the exception of families placed in a temporary accommodation unit as a conditional, are not eligible unless they received an approval for a HomeBASE Rental Assistance benefit on or before October 28th that is documented on the HomeBASE Daily Tally sheet.

HomeBASE Assessment and Referral Process

HomeBASE providers will continue to do the prescreen at the front door and refer families to the Homeless Coordinator for eligibility for EA benefits. The Homeless Coordinator will then give HomeBASE-eligible (those families 21 or older regardless of reason for homelessness) families the option to meet with a HomeBASE provider to discuss the Household Assistance benefit, in order for the family to make an informed decision between shelter and Household Assistance/HomeBASE. If the family chooses Household Assistance, the HomeBASE provider will continue working with the family. If, after reviewing the Household Assistance benefit, the family decides to go into EA shelter, the HomeBASE provider will refer the family back to the DHCD Homeless Coordinator for placement in shelter using the attached letter.

Communications

Communicating the change in the HomeBASE Program to families applying for EA on and after the October 28th date is critically important. Attached, please find:

- A **Notice of Suspension of HomeBASE Rental Assistance Benefit** that DHCD has developed and can be posted or handed out to families who are applying for EA
- Scripts that are specific to HomeBASE staff and homeless coordinators are also attached.
- An **Impact of HomeBASE Rental Assistance Suspension on EA Applicants** chart that provides a simple way of determining who is affected by this change.
- New Forms: If a family has met with the HomeBASE provider and instead chooses EA shelter, there is a form letter that the HomeBASE provider will use called **HomeBASE referral letter to Homeless Coordinator** to indicate that they are being referred back for shelter placement.

DHS Central Office staff and HomeBASE staff from the Division of Public Housing and Rental Assistance will be available to assist homeless coordinators and HomeBASE Front Door staff as this program change is implemented. We plan to be at as many local DTA/DHS Offices as possible to support staff and help inform families of the change to the program.

On behalf of DHCD, we want to thank you all for working so diligently under what have been very difficult circumstances. This is a true testament to your professionalism and dedication to the families we serve.