



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Operations Memo 2011-48
November 3, 2011

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Office Staff

From:  Stephanie Brown, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Program and External Relations

Re: DTA Families Receiving DHCD HomeBASE Housing Assistance

Background

In August 2011, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) implemented a new housing assistance program called the HomeBASE program. The HomeBASE program offers time-limited housing assistance to families who are at risk of homelessness as an alternative to placement in an EA family shelter or a motel. To be eligible for HomeBASE assistance, a family must first be determined EA-eligible by a DHCD Homeless Coordinator.

If the family is EA-eligible, the homeless coordinator will refer the family to a HomeBASE provider agency contracted by DHCD. The HomeBASE provider agency will assess the family's current housing situation and determine the type of HomeBASE assistance the family may receive.

Purpose of Memo

This Operations Memo informs staff about the HomeBASE housing assistance program. The memo also addresses the impact HomeBASE assistance has on the cash assistance and SNAP programs.

Case managers have no responsibility for determining eligibility for EA and HomeBASE assistance.

**Basic Types of
HomeBASE
Assistance**

The following are the basic types of HomeBASE assistance:

Rental Assistance Subsidy

The Rental Assistance subsidy allows for placement of the family in an apartment for up to 36 months with a temporary subsidy (not Section 8 or Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)) to prevent homelessness. The family pays 35% of their gross monthly income toward rent and utilities directly to the landlord and to utility companies.

Household Assistance

HomeBASE Household Assistance provides financial assistance and other support services to help families retain their current housing or obtain other housing when a Rental Assistance subsidy placement is not necessary to prevent homelessness. Families receiving Household Assistance can receive up to \$4,000 for housing stabilization purposes and homelessness prevention. This can include payment of first month's rent, last month's rent, a security deposit or payment of a family's costs to move outside of Massachusetts.

Temporary Accommodation

This is a short-term, non-rental, placement in an immediate temporary housing arrangement while the family awaits placement into a HomeBASE Rental Assistance subsidized apartment or into an alternative housing arrangement utilizing Household Assistance. The family pays no shelter costs because the placement is not long-term.

Stabilization Services

Stabilization Services involves case management by the HomeBASE provider agency staff, including housing search, budgeting assistance and other activities required for long-term housing stability. All families participating with HomeBASE must sign a HomeBASE Stabilization Service Plan agreeing to engage in specific activities outlined on their plan.

The HomeBASE provider agency determines the type(s) of assistance that will best help the family with their housing situation.

**Household
Assistance
Payments**

HomeBASE Household Assistance is available to help families with housing costs and other expenses while remaining in their current living situation, or obtaining new housing when Rental Assistance is not necessary. Families can receive up to \$4,000 each year to be used for housing stabilization purposes.

These payments are considered noncountable for TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP according to 106 CMR 204.250(U), 321.250(U) and 363.230(A).

**No Eligibility for
DTA Rent
Allowance**

Families placed in a HomeBASE Rental Assistance subsidized apartment or in Temporary Accommodation are **not** eligible for the DTA Rent Allowance in accordance with 106 CMR 705.910. When a family is placed in either a Rental Assistance Subsidy housing arrangement or a Temporary Accommodation housing arrangement, the case manager must complete BEACON according to the type of HomeBASE placement.

For a Rental Assistance Subsidy placement:

- go to the Address page and, in the Current Residence box, make sure the Homeless checkbox is **not** checked ;
- select Private Housing from the Type dropdown list;
- enter and validate the address in the Address field;
- in the Permanent Residence box, check the Same as current checkbox;
- in the Mailing box, if the client has a preferred mailing address enter that address, if not, check the Same as current checkbox;
- go to the Shelter Expenses and Standard Utility Allowance pages and enter all required data; and make sure the Subsidized housing indicator button on the Shelter Expenses page is set to Yes;
- go the Verification tab and verify the data;
- go to the Interview Wrapup page and wrap-up the case actions; and
- annotate the Narrative tab indicating the family lives in a HomeBASE Rental Assistance Subsidy apartment.

For a Temporary Accommodation placement:

- go to the Address page and in the Current Residence box, check the Homeless checkbox;
 - select Shelter from the Type dropdown list;
 - enter and validate the address in the Address field;
 - in the Permanent Residence box, check the None checkbox;
 - in the Mailing box, , if the client has a preferred mailing address enter that address, if not, check the Same as current checkbox;
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**No Eligibility for
DTA Rent
Allowance
(continued)**

- go to the Residential Facility page and check the No residential facility checkbox and click Finish;
 - go to the Shelter Expenses page and select the current expense type. Make sure the Subsidized housing indicator button is set to Yes. Click on the End button and click Finish;
 - go to the Standard Utility Allowance page, click the No radio button and click Finish;
 - go the Verification tab and verify the data;
 - go to the Interview Wrapup page and wrap-up the case actions; and
 - annotate the Narrative tab indicating the family currently resides temporarily in a HomeBASE Temporary Accommodation arrangement.
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**Income-in-Kind
and Eligibility for
Shelter Expense
Deductions**

For purposes of determining the DTA grant amount, families placed in Temporary Accommodation housing arrangements are not required to pay a portion of the rent or utilities while waiting to move to a HomeBASE Rental Assistance subsidized apartment, but are not subject to the income-in-kind \$148.50 shelter deduction because the placement is short-term.

For purposes of determining SNAP benefits, families placed in Temporary Accommodation housing arrangements are not incurring rent or utility costs, and therefore are not eligible for a shelter and/or utility deduction in accordance with 106 CMR 364.400(G)(1)(a) and(2). (Follow the BEACON instructions above to ensure the application of this policy.)

**Eligibility for
DTA Relocation
Benefit**

For the purpose of determining eligibility for Relocation Benefits only, families placed in Temporary Accommodation housing as defined by DHCD are considered to be living in temporary emergency shelter. These families are eligible for Relocation Benefits when the length of the Temporary Accommodation placement has lasted 60 days or more.

HomeBASE Rental Assistance subsidy placements which are long-term and can last up to 36 months are not considered emergency shelter, and therefore households in these placements are **not** eligible for Relocation Benefits.

Work Requirements and Housing Search

HomeBASE Rental Assistance Subsidy clients cannot meet their Work Program requirement through housing search because this type of assistance is long-term for up to 36 months, and therefore does not meet the definition of emergency shelter as described in 106 CMR 203.400.

Case managers must advise Work Program required clients living in a HomeBASE Rental Assistance Subsidy apartment that they must work or participate in an approved work-related activity or combination of activities to meet the work program requirement.

Tracking Families Who Access the HomeBASE Housing Assistance

DTA is working collaboratively with DHCD to develop a tracking system for families who are approved for the HomeBASE housing assistance program and to identify the type(s) of HomeBASE assistance the family is receiving.

Until a formal system is jointly developed and communicated, TAO staff should work closely with DHCD Homeless Coordinators to identify families who are participating in the HomeBASE housing assistance program. This will ensure cases are processed accurately and timely.

Program Eligibility Chart

Below is a program eligibility chart which describes eligibility for DTA benefits and policies while the family is receiving DHCD housing assistance and emergency shelter benefits:

DHCD Program Type	Grant Reduced by \$148.50?	Housing Search Counts for Work Program?	Eligible for Relocation Benefit?	Eligible for DTA Rental Allowance?
EA Shelter	Yes	Yes	Yes, after 60 days	No
HomeBASE Rental Assistance Subsidy up to 36 months	No	No	No	No
HomeBASE Temporary Accommodation	No	Yes, until client moves into a HB Subsidy unit or alternative housing.	Yes, after 60 days	No

Questions

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