

Access to Affordable Housing: MRVP

The **Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)** is the state's rental assistance program. MRVP helps low-income households pay their rent in private apartments by providing them with a monthly housing subsidy, much like Section 8. Several years ago, we ensured that voucher holders paid no more than 40% of their income for rent. Increases to this program can now be used to increase the number of vouchers and housing units, and are used to maintain our affordable housing stock.

Given the lack of affordable housing in the Commonwealth, it is essential that more funding be restored to this program. We must have housing that families can afford if we want to end family homelessness.

WIN: Despite the Governor's effort to decrease MRVP by \$2 million, we won an increase of \$1.2 million in funding for MRVP (7004-9024). Total funding for the program is now \$27.48 million. This increase will be enough to allow the reissuing of any vouchers turned back to the state (approximately 120-200 per year) and to preserve existing project-based affordable units.

Access to Shelter

Emergency Assistance (EA), the **family shelter program**, provides emergency shelter, housing search and stabilization services to thousands of homeless children and their parents across the state. For these families, shelter is a last resort. They utilize shelter when all their other housing options have been exhausted.

WIN: While funding for shelter (4403-2120) remained the same at \$73.6 million, the income eligibility for shelter was raised back to 130% of the federal poverty limit (\$25,155 for a family of four). Also, once in shelter, if a family goes over the income eligibility limit, they will be able to stay in shelter for six months to save for housing, rather than being terminated immediately. Another change is that families who appear to be eligible but are missing the required paperwork will be allowed to enter shelter for 30 days while they obtain the correct verifications; this is called "presumptive eligibility."

Also, DTA must track and report on families applying for and using the shelter system. This "tracking and reporting" language will help us to understand how many families are being denied shelter and for what reasons, how families are terminated from shelter and why, and where families go when they leave shelter.