

## **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:** We won an increase of \$2.5 million in funding for MRVP (7004-9024). Total funding for the program is now \$29.96 million. With this increase, hundreds of households throughout the state will receive housing subsidies. This is a huge win, but we need more, so we are happy to report that we have the commitment of the Legislature to continue increasing funding for the program.

## **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.

Before significant changes made by the Legislature in fy2005 and fy2006, over half of the families who applied for shelter were denied. In the past three years, the Legislature has increased the income eligibility to 130% of the federal poverty level. In addition, families who appear otherwise eligible for shelter but do not have all the required paperwork are considered "presumptively eligible" and are allowed to enter shelter immediately for thirty days while they obtain the correct verifications. The Legislature also ensured that working families are able to remain in shelter for six months after exceeding the income eligibility requirements. Now, instead of being terminated immediately, parents can maximize their income and save money for sustainable permanent housing.

**WIN:** Funding for shelter (4403-2120) was increased by \$6.6 million for a total of \$83.12 million. With this funding, we will be able to maintain the current level of services to families. In addition, DTA will be able to create new innovative programs to assist families in new ways, focusing on preventing families from having to go into shelter and helping families move on from shelter to permanent housing faster.

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For more information, contact Homes for Families

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