

Parent:
Can I get into shelter while my child is hospitalized?



5

Social Worker:

You can **apply** for EA shelter while your child is hospitalized. However, you cannot **go** to your shelter placement unless your child is physically with you.

Parent:
How will I get to the shelter placement?



6

Social Worker:

DHCD will provide transportation to the shelter. But once you are there, you will be responsible for your own transportation.

Parent:
What if I do not like my placement?
Can I say no?



7

Social Worker:

It is very important that you accept and go to the first shelter placement DHCD offers. **If you turn down your placement, DHCD can bar you from EA shelter for one year.** Once you get to your placement, you can ask to be transferred to a better location. If you do not like your placement for a health or disability-related reason (e.g., there is carpet that triggers your child's asthma), you can ask to be transferred as a "reasonable accommodation."

Parent:
Can my whole family stay together?



8

Social Worker:

Not necessarily. Children always are placed with at least one parent, but other adults in your household, including children over 21, may not be included.



Key Tips for Applicants:

If your application is approved:

- **Get to the DTA office as early as you can.** You could be waiting all day for a placement.
- **Everyone in your household must be there when you apply** (except for children who are in the hospital). Plan to go straight to your placement that day. Bring all of your belongings.
- **DHCD must take your application** if you are there before 4pm. If you are sent away before 4pm, ask to speak with the supervisor.
- **Accept the first shelter placement you are offered**, even if you do not like it. If you turn down an EA placement, you will be barred from EA assistance shelter for one year.

If your application is denied:

- **DHCD must give you a written letter** stating the reason. You have the right to appeal the denial. Make sure you get a copy of the denial letter.
- **You have the right to re-apply** for EA shelter at any time, as many times as you want – even after your application is denied.
- **You can get a temporary 30-day "presumptive" placement** even with just a few documents (see *What Paperwork to Bring*).



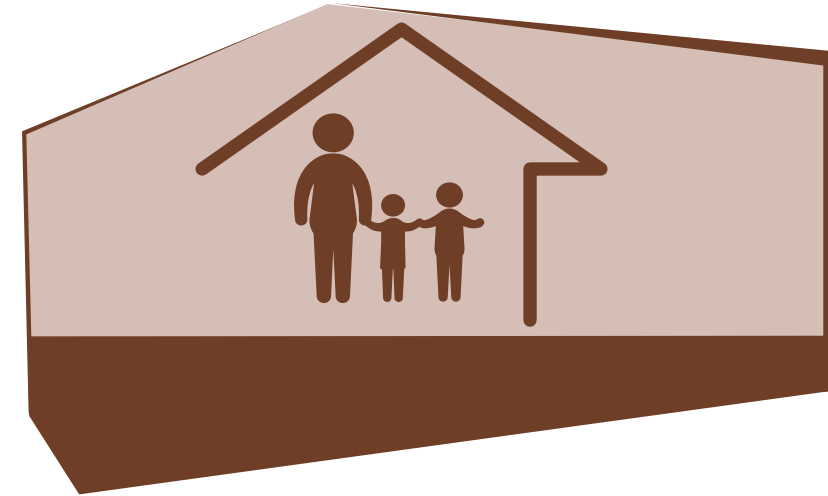
FYI: Homelessness by itself is not abuse or

- **neglect of a child.** Child welfare workers from the Department of Children & Families (DCF) will do a "Health and Safety Assessment" with families who need shelter due to health and safety risks. *These interviews are not abuse investigations*, and DCF cannot take your child solely because your family is homeless.

Navigating Access to Emergency Assistance Shelter



An *It Takes Two* Guide for Families and Providers



 **MLPB**

We are grateful to Community Legal Aid for its contribution to the content.

Designed by *Artists for Humanity*

Information contained in this document is for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or establish an attorney-client relationship. If patients or caregivers have specific questions, they should contact a lawyer or advocate.

June 2017

v. 2



What Paperwork to Bring

**To be eligible for 30 days (“presumptive” placement),
bring paperwork in categories 1-4**
Check at least one box from each category:

**To be eligible for long-term stay (“full” placement),
bring paperwork in categories 1-7**
Check at least one box from each category:

1. ELIGIBLE REASON FOR HOMELESSNESS:

- Health or safety risk, **OR**
- Domestic violence, **OR**
- Natural disaster, **OR**
- Eviction that was not your fault (ex. laid off from job)

2. PROOF OF IDENTITY OF ALL FAMILY MEMBERS:

- Driver’s license or state ID card, **OR**
- Birth certificate, **OR**
- Passport or immigration documents (ex. green card)

3. PROOF OF MASS. RESIDENCY (OR INTENT TO RESIDE)

FOR ALL FAMILY MEMBERS:

- Recent lease or utility bill, **OR**
- School registration or records, **OR**
- Voter registration, **OR**
- Letter from DTA or SSA confirming benefits

4. PROOF OF CUSTODY OF ALL CHILDREN:

- Child’s birth certificate, **OR**
- Court order of adoption, guardianship, divorce, child support or custody, **OR**
- School or medical records that show relationship of child to adult, **OR**
- Sworn statements from relatives or neighbors that say child spends most of their time with you

5. PROOF OF REASON YOU ARE HOMELESS:

- Health or safety risk in current housing (ex.= picture or letter that shows you are living someplace “not fit for human habitation” letters confirming you have had to stay in many different places or someplace violent or unstable), **OR**
- Domestic violence (ex. police report, court paperwork, medical record, letter from advocate), **OR**
- Natural disaster (ex. letter from Red Cross, police, fire, or MEMA), **OR**
- Eviction that was not your fault (ex. Notice to Quit, court paperwork, and proof of reason you could not pay rent)

6. PROOF OF IMMIGRATION STATUS FOR ONE FAMILY MEMBER:

- US birth certificate, **OR**
- Passport or naturalization certificate, **OR**
- Other immigration document showing “lawful presence” (ex. green card)

7. PROOF OF INCOME:

- Letter from DTA or SSA confirming amount of benefits, **OR**
- Pay stubs or verification letter from employer confirming income, **OR**
- Copy of deposited paycheck or benefit payment, **OR**
- Layoff or dismissal notice from employer, **OR**
- Copy of unemployment claim

Adapted from masslegalhelp.org

Parent*:

I just lost my apartment, and my kids and I have nowhere to go. What should I do now?

1

Social Worker:

You might be eligible for free Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter through the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). You will need to show that your income is low. You also have to show you are homeless for a reason that is not your fault. See the *What Paperwork to Bring* checklist for more details.

Parent:

OK, that could work for me. Where do I apply for EA shelter?

2

Social Worker:

You apply at certain Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) offices. Everyone in your household who wants to enter shelter will have to be there with you. You should plan to go to your shelter placement *that day*, so you will need to bring all of your belongings. See the *What Paperwork to Bring* checklist for more details.

Parent:

I am an immigrant. Am I eligible for EA shelter?

3

Social Worker:

As long as *one* person in your household (who is applying for shelter with you) is a US citizen or a Legal Permanent Resident (LPR = green card holder), the whole household is eligible. This is true even if the US citizen or LPR is a child.

Parent:

Do I have to live in Massachusetts to get a shelter placement?

4

Social Worker:

Yes, you must be a Massachusetts resident or have “intent to permanently reside” in Massachusetts. If you just moved here, DHCD will ask for proof that you want to stay here. See the *What Paperwork to Bring* checklist for more details.