

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Charles D. Baker, Governor ♦ Karyn E. Polito, Lt. Governor ♦ Jennifer D. Maddox, Undersecretary

EA Family Shelter COVID -19 Temporary Update and Moratorium of Uniform Shelter Rules
This temporary guidance is in effect for the duration of the State of Emergency. Continuation or suspension of these temporary rule changes will be assessed based on any forthcoming or ending of Executive Orders issued by the Governor.

Overview

In response to the global COVID-19 pandemic and [Executive Order: COVID-19 Order No.13](#); DHCD is adopting a temporary series of changes to the Uniform Shelter Rules in order to promote social distancing and minimize the spread the COVID-19 virus in EA Family Shelter Programs. These changes do not alter eligibility for or the level of benefits under this program, and benefit EA families by reducing the risk of contracting COVID-19

In accordance with guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the federal Center for Disease Control, to reduce COVID -19 transmission, all citizens should limit interactions with others to minimize the risk of contracting COVID-19 or transmitting it to others. Particularly in a congregate or co-shelter setting where staff and other families may be affected, families receiving EA benefits should limit their time outside of the shelter visiting other households and gathering places in the community to essential services and needs only. Specifically, this document addresses the following:

- COVID-19 Pandemic Temporary Updates to the Uniform Shelter Rules
- COVID-19 Pandemic Moratorium: Overnight Policies
- COVID-19 Pandemic Addendum: Extended Leave and Temporary Shelter Interruptions

COVID-19 Pandemic Temporary Updates to the Uniform Shelter Rules

- **Visitation Rules:** Outside visitors to shelter programs are temporarily prohibited except as specifically set forth in this notice. Exceptions to the No Visitors Policy include: DCF and/or court ordered visitations that cannot be facilitated outside of the shelter, visiting nurses, CPA, or to address any other serious medical need. Families are also prohibited from visiting inside one another's units. All outside visitors must be screened for COVID-19 exposure and symptoms and follow CDC and DPH guidelines regarding hand washing, social distancing, covering coughs and sneezes and wearing masks, or a cloth face cover. Outside visitors must meet with families in their shelter units, or a designated visitor's area that minimizes a visitor's interactions with the facility, staff and residents/guests. Shelters should assure surfaces are disinfected promptly after any permitted visit.
- **Babysitting Rules:** Families are temporarily prohibited from babysitting children from another EA Household. A child age 14 or over can babysit for him/herself and for his/her younger household members but only with advance approval except in case of emergency.
- **COVID-19 Child Care Plan:** All families must update and/or confirm emergency contact information and a plan for the care of children in case of an emergency. Attached is a sample template providers may use to collect emergency contact information.

Moratorium on Non-Emergency Short-Term Overnight Absences from Shelter:

Unless related to emergency medical needs or other emergency health and safety considerations, no short-term (less than two week) overnight absences from shelter shall be permitted. Exceptions for emergency medical needs or other emergency health and safety considerations must be authorized by the shelter provider before the household is absent overnight and must be submitted as a Serious Incident Report and noted in the ETO system. Any household leaving on an emergency overnight will be subject to COVID-19 Screening protocols by the shelter provider upon returning to their shelter program.

Extended Leave (2 weeks or more) With Intent to Return to Shelter Unit

DHCD is temporarily authorizing Extended Leaves (for periods of 2 weeks or more) for families that have a temporary, safe alternative to shelter for the purpose of social distancing, isolation, quarantine, or care of self or another family member related to COVID-19 or non-COVID 19 medical care and other emergencies. An Extended Leave can be approved by the shelter provider and must be noted in ETO. Families must make contact (via phone, text, or email) with shelter provider personnel at least once per week. Families on extended leave may maintain their shelter placements and may continue to access supports from their EA provider during the period of extended leave. Any family leaving on an Extended Leave will be subject to COVID-19 Screening protocols by the shelter provider upon returning to shelter.

Temporary Shelter Interruption (TESI) (30 days or more) - Vacating Shelter Unit

The TESI policy is temporarily amended by adding: “Secured temporary, safe alternatives to shelter for the purpose of social distancing, isolation, quarantine, or care of self and/or another family member during the global COVID-Pandemic” as a qualifying reason for a TESI. TESI requests should be submitted to DHCD for approval. COVID-19 related TESI’s will be approved for 30 days and can be extended upon request. Note that a TESI requires a family to vacate their shelter unit and suspends case management and housing search assistance and HomeBASE eligibility that is routinely facilitated by the shelter provider.

In order for families return to shelter or access HomeBASE funds and diversion services, households must contact DHCD Homeless Coordinator through the telephonic intake line (1-866-584-0653). Note: Any family re-entering shelter will be subject to COVID-19 Screening protocols by the Homeless Coordinators and Service Provider prior to shelter intake.

This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). The Department of Housing and Community Development is working closely with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Department of Public Health and the federal Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide updated information about the novel coronavirus outbreak.

This guidance will be updated as needed and as additional information is available. Please regularly check mass.gov/covid19 for updated interim guidance.

Each organization faces specific challenges associated with implementation based on its population, physical space, staffing, etc., and will need to tailor its implementation of these guidelines accordingly. This guidance is intended to supplement, not supplant, contracts with the Department of Housing and Community Development. Organizations may develop their own policies, but these policies should be based on current science and facts, not fear, and they should never compromise a program participant’s or employee’s health.

Shelter Location:

Case Manager:

Who will be taking care of your child(ren)? Please attach additional forms if your children will have distinct caretakers

- **Name:**
- **Relationship:**
- **Address:**
- **Phone:**
- **Any additional contact name/numbers:**

Has transportation been arranged and what are the details?

What will they need to take with them., i.e.: diapers, formula, medicine, clothes, school work, specific comfort items?

Is there a bag packed for the child?

Any special circumstances that we should be aware of?

If DCF is involved has the plan of care been discussed with them?

DCF worker:

Telephone:

Office: