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Town of Sudbury

Board of Health Social Work Department

What To Do When Facing Homelessness: A Guide to Preserving and Finding Housing

Successful prevention of homelessness involves identifying risks of homelessness and acting as soon as possible and taking a multipronged approach. Whenever possible, steps to prevent a potential eviction should be taken immediately.

Prevention:

Prevention is key! If you are evicted, it makes finding future housing more challenging. Also, getting evicted from subsidized housing may make it near impossible to get into subsidized housing in the future. Although the eviction process is very overwhelming, it is critical to act as soon as possible and reach out for help and resources.

If you are currently homeless

- Are there any family or friends that you can stay with while you develop a more permanent plan?
- **Shelters and Programs:**
Here are lists of shelters and transitional housing services in MA:
 - <https://www.tuck.com/sleeping-homeless/#ma>
 - <https://www.mass.gov/emergency-housing-assistance-programs>
 - <https://www.healthcarewithoutwalls.org/shelter-directory>
 - Family Promise provides holistic family sheltering and case management. This is a multi-month program and requires screening for eligibility. As with many shelters and homelessness programs, there is often a waitlist, <http://www.familypromisemetrowest.org/>.
- **Pet Foster Care and Low Cost Pet Services:**
Please note that these programs cover a large geographic area as people often need to move out of their current geographic area to find available housing or, in the case of domestic violence, to gain safe distance from an abusive situation.
 - Do you have a friend or family member who can house your pets?
 - If not, have you contacted area human societies and pet shelters about fostering options?
 - The Second Step in Newton: Can provide individual pet safety conversations on their domestic violence hotline: 781-235-8460
 - Safe People Safe Pets: Must be working with an advocate and be leaving a domestic violence situation. If a foster home is available, they can typically house pets for 30-60 days. 617-999-3055; SafePeopleSafePets@yahoo.com
 - Safety Plan for Animals (SPAN): Program through Dakin Human Society Springfield, MA, provides temporary foster care for the pets of people

who are: elderly or disabled and need a temporary stay in a hospital or nursing facility; seeking emergency shelter from domestic violence; or seeking alternative housing due to a fire. 413-781-4000;

<https://www.dakinhumane.org/animal-safety-plan.html>

- Elizabeth Freeman Center Safe Pet Program: Program affiliated with the Berkshire Human Society that temporarily fosters pets for people who are experiencing domestic violence or elder abuse. 866-401-2425; <http://www.havennetwork.org/SafePet-Program.pdf>
- Phinney's Friends: Volunteer organization that helps pet owners keep and care for their pets. At times, they can also offer temporary foster services. 617-979-8705; <http://phinneys.org/get-help/>
- For other resources for pets, please visit www.sudbury.ma.us/socialworker and see the "Pets" drop down menu.

Affordable and Subsidized Housing:

- If you are low-income, you are encouraged to apply for as many subsidized apartments as you can (both state and federally funded) and to do so immediately.
 - **For information on federal subsidized housing** in the Sudbury area and across Massachusetts, please visit the Mass Housing Website, https://www.masshousing.com/portal/server.pt/community/rental_housing/240/looking_for_an_affordable_apartment. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the link for "Mass Housing Housing List." This will bring up an up to date list of properties by town. For individuals without a housing voucher, please look for properties labeled "PB Properties." Unfortunately, there is not a common application or one place to submit applications. Instead, reach out to any property where you would like to apply. Request an application and inquire about their waitlists. Also, confirm with them that you are meeting eligibility for their property.
 - **For information on state funded housing** visit <https://publichousingapplication.ocd.state.ma.us/>. There is a common application that can be used to apply for multiple properties.

Waitlists vary by property and can be several years long. It is recommended that those in need of housing cast their nets wide and get on as many waitlists as they are able, to increase the chances of getting housing.

- Section 8 Housing Vouchers: Reports are that waitlists can be upwards of 10 years. <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/section-8-housing-choice-voucher-program-hcvp>. For those who already have obtained Section 8 vouchers, please visit <https://www.gosection8.com/> for a listing of available rentals.
- The Regional Housing Services Office: Has information on affordable housing opportunities in the area. For more information, visit: <https://www.rhsohousing.org/>.
- The Citizen's Housing and Planning Association: Has information and workshops regarding affordable housing and homeownership. For more information, visit: <https://www.chapa.org/> There is a lot of information under the "Housing and Courses" tab, including a link to Mass Access to find accessible housing for those with special housing needs as well as 40B units.

- The Department of Housing and Community Development: Through its community and business partners, provides affordable housing options, financial assistance, and other support to Massachusetts communities, <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/housing-and-community-development>.
- Surrounding towns may also have private affordable and/or subsidized housing. This will not be listed through state and federal housing websites, and requires additional searching.

Financial Assistance

- Another challenge is often affording first, last and security deposit. Organizations may be able to help with some emergency financial assistance include:
 - SMOC in Framingham, 508-872-4853.
 - St. Vincent de Paul in Sudbury, 978-443-2647 or 978-443-8981.
- SMOC in Framingham :Has limited homelessness funds and resources. This includes RAFT funds to prevent homelessness, including help with utility bills, rent, etc. 508-872-0765; kmichaud@smoc.org.
- The Sudbury Planning Department: Offers home repair grants for residents. This can be helpful should home repairs or home repair costs create a risk for homelessness. 978-639-3397.
- Mass Housing: Offers a Home Improvement Loan Program as well, https://www.masshousing.com/portal/server.pt/community/home_owner_loans/228/home_improvement_loans.
- HOPE Sudbury: Provides small emergency grants for those who meet eligibility criteria. Contact the Sudbury Board of Health Social Worker at 978-440-5476.
- St. Vincent de Paul: Can also help with emergency grants for those who meet eligibility criteria. 978-443-2647; 978-443-8981.
- The Department of Housing and Community Development: Through its community and business partners, provides affordable housing options, financial assistance, and other support to Massachusetts communities. It is helpful to explore their website thoroughly, <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/housing-and-community-development>.
- MassHealth: Offers certain home- and community-based service waivers that make long-term community services available to eligible individuals. The cost savings may help to keep people in their homes, <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/home-and-community-based-services-waivers>.

Financial Advice and Education

Increasing income, decreasing spending, and raising credit scores help individuals to secure and maintain housing.

- Budget Resources: Finding ways to cut expenses and save money in other areas can help to free up money for housing costs. This can be done through the use of community resources and programs (ex: food stamps, food pantries, utility discounts, clothing vouchers, free cell phones, low cost internet, etc.). Please see various resource pages and information on the Board of Health Social Work website: www.sudbury.ma.us/socialworker
- Financial Literacy Programs: Creating a budget and sticking to it can be a challenge but is another key to success when it comes to saving money and raising credit scores.

Financial literacy programs such as those offered through the Marlborough Community Development Corporation, 508-658-0222, and Budget Buddies, contact the Sudbury Board of Health at 978-440-5476, can help you to identify your personal financial goals and assist you in meeting those goals through 1:1 coaching that uses both traditional and creative problem-solving approaches.

- Credential to Career: Coaching program is periodically offered in the MetroWest area. Connects residents to higher paying careers through groups, career exploration, individual coaching and addressing obstacles.
<https://www.onefamilyinc.org/c2c> or call the Sudbury Board of Health Social Worker at 978-440-5476.
- Another helpful resource is the Sudbury Board of Health's Guide to moving:
<https://sudbury.ma.us/socialworker/a-guide-to-moving/>.
- One of the main concerns is the high cost of housing. Housing in Sudbury and areas east of 495 tend to have higher rents and costs of living. It is also more costly to live in a single-family home or individual apartment. If you are unable to access subsidized housing due to lengthy waitlists or issues with eligibility it is strongly recommended that you explore housing west of 495. As a general rule, the further west, the less expensive. It is also recommended to explore shared living/roommate housing opportunities to cut down on rent and utility costs.
- If poor credit is a barrier to securing housing, it is worth asking the landlord if they are willing to accept an extra month's rent as security.

Veterans

- Veterans Inc.: 1-800-482-2565; <http://www.veteransinc.org/services/housing-programs/>.
- Veterans' Services Officer: 978-936-3357 or 508-573-0107;
<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/local-veterans-service-officers>.
- Veterans Northeast Outreach Center: 508-460-9993; <https://www.vneoc.org>.

Homelessness due to Domestic Violence

- If you have left your home due to domestic violence and need immediate help:
 - Local emergency rooms often have beds reserved for domestic violence emergencies where residents can stay for a single night.
 - Safelink Hotline: Clearing house for all domestic violence shelters in MA. The best times to call are 9 a.m. and 3p.m., but it has been recommended to call hourly throughout the day, 877-785-2020.
 - Local agencies such as Domestic Violence Services Network, 888-399-6111, Voices Against Violence, 800-593-1125, and REACH Beyond Domestic Violence, 800-899-4000, can provide safety planning and help with referrals and resources including shelters and housing. They may also have resources for displaced pets.
 - Department of Transitional Assistance: Can help with emergency housing for those experiencing domestic violence. Currently, Framingham does not have a housing specialist, so Sudbury residents should call Worcester DTA, 866-584-0653.

Coping with Substance Abuse

- Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information and Education Helpline: Can provide information on treatment options, including residential treatment when needed, 800-372-5050.

Resources for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities

- The Sudbury Assessors Office: Offers property tax programs to help senior and low-income residents, 978-639-3393.
- Bay Path Elder Services: May be able to help with creative options when senior residents are homeless or facing homelessness. They can also provide in-home and other supports to reduce expenses and address safety concerns that may put seniors at risk of homelessness, 508-573-7200.
- The Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP): Works with tenants, including families with children with disabilities, facing eviction as a result of behavior related to a disability (e.g. mental illness, intellectual disabilities, substance abuse, aging related impairments). TPP functions as a neutral party to the landlord and tenant. In consultation with the Housing Court Department, TPP works with the property owner and tenant to determine whether the disability can be reasonably accommodated and the tenancy preserved, 617-788-6500.
- Seniors with significant medical needs can explore rest home options

Legal Resources

- MetroWest Legal Services: Provides free legal services to seniors and low-income individuals, including monthly legal housing clinics to address issues such as eviction defense, including tenants whose landlords have been foreclosed upon, administrative appeal matters for applicants who have been denied admission into subsidized housing programs or for participants who have had their housing benefits terminated, and homeowner's facing foreclosure, 508-620-1830.

Comprehensive Resources

- Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH) also provides information and support to prevent homelessness, evictions and foreclosures and to increase access to affordable housing. They can be reached at 617-567-5882 or by visiting: <http://noahcdc.org/?q=programs>.
- Housing Consumer Education Center (HCEC) through SMOC: Provides a variety of services to tenants, landlords, homeowners, future homebuyers, homeless individuals and families along with individuals and families facing eviction who are not eligible for DTA services. This service is provided through information and referral, individual counseling, workshops, seminars, and financial support options, <http://www.smoc.org/housing-consumer-education-center.php>.

Walk in hours:

SMOC, 7 Bishop St, Framingham, 1st floor

Monday-Thursday 9am to 4:30pm

Clients may check in at the front desk on the first floor to complete an assessment and meet with staff one on one.