

# Amendment 344

## Emergency Assistance Technical Amendment: Data and Income

*This amendment will minimize the cliff effect for families in shelter and increase reporting requirements for the Department of Housing and Community Development relative to the Emergency Assistance system.*

### **Minimizing the EA Cliff:**

The **current policy** states that “any family whose income exceeds 115 per cent of the federal poverty level while the family is receiving assistance funded by this item shall not become ineligible for assistance due to exceeding the income limit for a period of 6 months from the date that the income level was exceeded”

This “6 month clock” applies to all families, whose income exceeds the income cap (\$1,556/mo for a family of two and \$1,957/mo for a family of three), including those:

- unable to maintain employment due to medical needs, a lack of child care and/or transportation
- working short term jobs through seasonal employment, temp/day labor agencies, and paid internships
- able to pick up occasional extra shifts in a current job

This policy creates a disincentive for families to increase their incomes, and punishes those that do by determining them ineligible despite their income being below the income eligibility cap.

This **Amendment** will make it so that the “6 month clock” only applies to families that sustain their income above the 115% of a period of 90 days. This will:

- protect families who are not able to sustain employment due to health or other barriers
- support parents to increase their work experience through seasonal and temporary employment and internships
- allow parents to increase their savings

As a result of this policy change, families and shelter programs can focus more on employment, gaining work experience and increasing incomes as a pathway to overcoming homelessness. With increased incomes and work experience, more families may be able to utilize the HomeBASE benefit and reduce the average length of stay in shelters.

### **Additional Data:**

DHCD is required by existing statute to report monthly and quarterly. This amendment seeks to add the following data points to the reports:

- to the monthly report: the number of applications that were denied and the reasons for such denials and the number of applications of families who timed off of HomeBASE because the household is no longer income eligible
- to the quarterly report: the ages of the heads of household; the race and ethnicity of heads of households; the number of children served, broken down by age; the average income and breakdown of income type; and a breakdown of educational attainment of the heads of household

This data will provide more information about the impact of eligibility requirements and effectiveness of short term resources, so that the Commonwealth can continue to make policy improvements and target prevention resources for the purpose of reducing family homelessness. More information about the families the shelter system serves will help the legislature and other stakeholders to understand who the system is serving, trends, and the roles of other agencies.