

# Emergency Assistance (7004-0101)

## Family Shelter



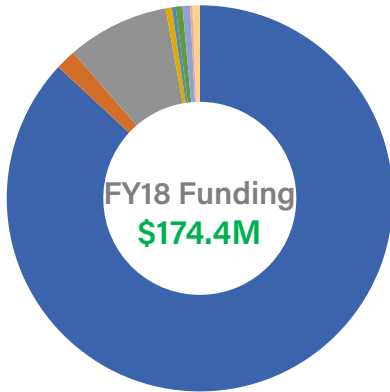
The state's Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter system currently provides shelter, housing search, and stabilization services to families that meet strict eligibility criteria. The program is currently serving approximately **3,700 families**, including over **7,000 children**.

### Funding:

The EA Line item provides funding for shelter contracts (\$151.6M) across 47 agencies, including staffing for prevention and diversion in local intake offices and flexible funding to address barriers to re-housing; stabilization services (\$14.8M); motels \$3M; and other expenses (\$5M), including transitional housing, transportation, translation services, and contracts with the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Public Health, and earmarked agencies. FY19 Funding is projected at \$176M.

### Funding Recommendation for FY20: \$178M

to allow for 12 month contracts, address capacity needs, reduce the need for supplemental funding, and to address any capacity needs.



**To qualify for shelter:** families must be a resident of Massachusetts; have a gross income of below 115% of the federal poverty level; have a child under the age of 21, or be pregnant; and be homeless due to one of four categories: 1) No fault fire, flood, natural disaster, condemnation, or foreclosure; 2) Fleeing domestic violence; 3) No fault eviction; or 4) Child(ren) are exposed to a substantial health and safety risk.

**Once eligible/in shelter:** families are then eligible for the HomeBASE program for diversion or re-housing, and are required to have a re-housing plan and follow uniform shelter rules. Families become ineligible after a period of 6 months if their income exceeds 115% of the federal poverty level for a sustained period of 90 days.

### Language & Policy Recommendations:

#### ➤ Ensure Fair "Front Door" Practices:

- Consider the depletion of HomeBASE benefits as a loss of income for EA eligibility determinations
- Allow access for families at imminent risk of homelessness to prevent families from having to stay in places not meant for human habitation
- Transfer the responsibility of Health and Safety Assessments from the child protection agency (DCF) to the Department of Public Health (DPH)

#### ➤ Support Work and Reduce the Cliff Effect:

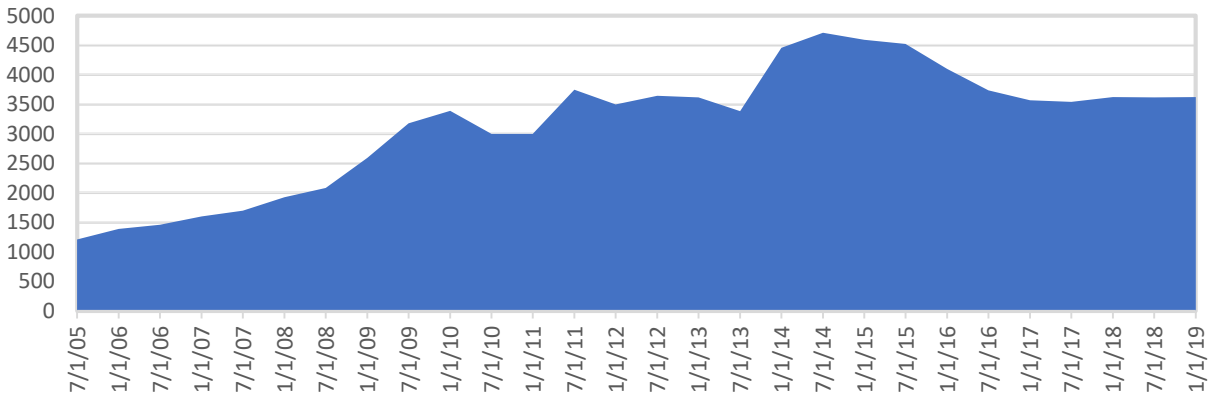
- Increase the income cap for families receiving EA benefits from 115% of the Federal Policy Level (\$1,409/month for a family of 2) to 200% (\$32,920)

#### ➤ Ensure Program Efficiencies:

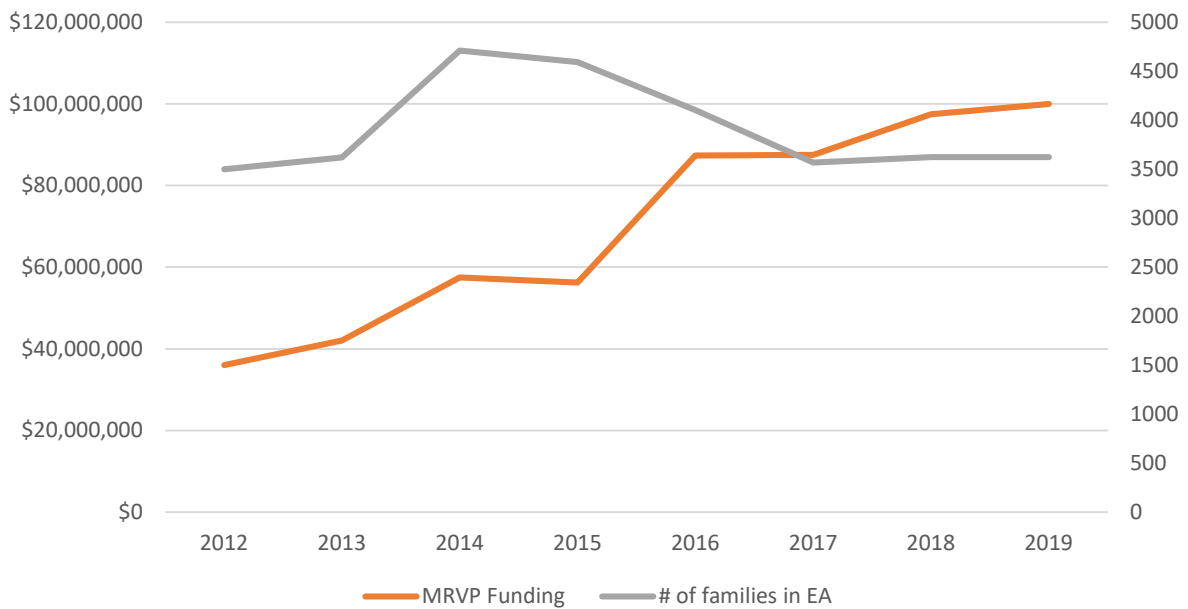
- Ensure all families in EA receive housing search assistance within 2 weeks, instead of the current budget language mandate of 16 weeks
- Improve data and reporting language to include demographic information and align with HomeBASE reporting
- Maintain technical assistance language

The number of families in shelter on any given night is more than double the number of families in shelter before the recession.

Number of Families in EA Shelter Over Time



Investments in housing subsidies for families in EA will reduce the shelter caseload.



**7,355** households completed applications for EA in FY18; **3,787** entered shelter. Investments in prevention will reduce the demand/need for emergency assistance.

Reasons for Entering EA Shelter (FY18)

