

Residential Congregate Care Provider Surge Financial Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic April 27, 2020



The Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) is implementing a second phase of increased funding of **\$44 million across the Purchase of Service/ Ch. 257 residential congregate care service providers** during the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding is for increased staffing costs, infection control, and personal protective equipment (PPE). This is in addition to the first phase of \$95 million of funding announced on March 30th for residential congregate care services and other EOHHS Purchase of Service/ Ch. 257 programs. This brings the **total investment for these providers to \$139 million during the COVID-19 public health crisis**.

EOHHS agencies work with **238 residential service providers** throughout the Commonwealth to ensure the health and well-being of over **20,500 individuals** reflecting diverse populations, including: children, youth and families, and individuals with physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioral health, intellectual and developmental disabilities and survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

Given the diversity, and the unique circumstances of each organization, providers have taken various actions to support their workforce and their clients during this unprecedented time. For example: offering “double time” pay to employees working with COVID positive individuals/units, “hoteling” staff working with COVID positive patients, providing differential pay, and other actions. They have also invested funding into infection control (including housekeeping and terminal cleaning services) and PPE supplies.

Therefore, these funds acknowledge the actions taken to date and provide reasonable flexibility to providers to meet the specific needs of staff and clients during this pandemic and surge period. **However, it is the expectation that residential congregate care providers use the increased funding exclusively for (1) staffing for clinical, direct care and support staff (e.g., wage increases, incentives); (2) infection control, including housekeeping and environmental services; (3) PPE; and (4) other supports that directly benefit staff (e.g., hotels).** Providers will be required to report to EOHHS on actual use of the funding.

In addition to financial support, EOHHS has implemented testing for staff and residents at a range of congregate care settings. On April 10, EOHHS began testing at congregate care sites and has completed testing at over 450 program site locations to date. Testing is in addition to providing guidance on infection control protocols and operational considerations, which is continually updated and communicated with providers per the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH).

Financial Relief Package

Phase I: \$95 million

On March 30, 2020, EOHHS announced **\$95 million for residential service providers**, a 10% increase over historical average monthly billing (November-January) for Tier 1 and Tier 2 contracted providers, including rest

homes. The first payments were issued during the first week of April (for March services) and will continue for services delivered through June 30.

- **Applicable providers:** Specific Purchase of Service (POS) providers and certain MassHealth Home and Community Based Services Waiver providers that contract with the EOHHS and its agencies and **continue to serve members and clients** during the COVID-19 state of emergency.
- These providers include:

Tier	Provider(s)
Tier 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential Services (i.e. DDS, DCF, DMH, DYS, DPH) and Rest Homes
Tier 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In home services, Elder homecare, Family Support, and other health and human services providers delivering essential services to keep members/clients safe in their homes or residences and out of the hospital

Phase 2: \$44 million

The Tier 1 residential congregate care service providers are experiencing significantly increased costs related to the COVID-19 surge period. The surge related costs include increased staffing, staffing differentials and incentives, increased cleaning services and personal protective equipment (PPE) needs as more congregate settings include COVID-19 positive clients and staff. This is especially true as we have ramped up mobile testing of congregate care sites.

- In early April, EOHHS engaged with providers representing different congregate care settings to collect information on how the Phase 1 funding has been used to address the increased costs during the public health emergency. Overall, providers have increased staffing costs and expenses related to COVID-19 infections among staff and clients.
- To mitigate surge expenses, EOHHS' agencies will increase the monthly reimbursement for Tier 1 residential providers for services in the months of May and June by an additional 15% for an increase of 25% on average monthly billing (November-January). The \$44 million in funds are for surge related expenses across the residential service system. Rest homes are also included.
- In addition to financial support to address provider needs during the surge, EOHHS has implemented other targeted support streams for providers, including:
 - Expanding COVID-19 mobile testing at some provider sites for residents and staff; and
 - Coordinating with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to make PPE available to providers.