

MASSACHUSETTS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

# Mass Workforce Issuance

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☐ Policy ☒ Information

**To:** Chief Elected Officials  
Workforce Development Board Chairs  
Workforce Development Board Directors  
Title I Administrators  
Career Center Directors  
Title I Fiscal Officers  
DCS Operations Managers

**cc:** WIOA State Partners

**From:** Alice Sweeney, Director  
Department of Career Services

**Date:** July 24, 2018

**Subject:** **Housing and Benefits Access for Hurricane Evacuees**

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**Purpose:** To notify Local Workforce Development Boards, One-Stop Career Center Operators and other workforce investment partners of:

- the creation of the MA Evacuee Temporary Assistance Reserve (METAR)
- benefits available to climate refugees
- the extension of the FEMA Transitional Shelter Assistance (TSA)

**Background:** FEMA Transitional Shelter Assistance (TSA) and the Commonwealth funded Red Cross programs have been supporting Hurricanes Irma and Maria evacuees (henceforth referred to as “climate refugees”) living in hotels in Massachusetts for the last eight months. These benefits were set to expire on July 1, 2018. However, FEMA has released a policy extending the TSA program. Evacuee households living in hotels have been made aware of this through FEMA and other service providers. The new deadline by which climate refugees and medically dependent individuals must check out of hotel units is **August 7, 2018**. Climate refugees are eligible to obtain free airfare to fly home, with a stipend toward coverage for luggage and pet transportation fees. The new Massachusetts Evacuee Transitional Assistance Reserve (METAR) provides climate refugees with additional financial and material benefits, which will be discussed in this issuance.

As a reminder, should any eligible evacuees decide not to pursue housing in Massachusetts and opt to return home to Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth will

continue to provide the transportation benefit mentioned previously. Information regarding the transportation benefit can be obtained by dialing “211” on any phone.

**Information:** There are currently 161 households in hotel units through TSA. One hundred twenty-six are families. There are an additional 127 households supported through METAR financial assistance. These are two separate benefit systems. TSA is through FEMA, METAR is through MEMA (Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency). TSA housing aid expires on August 7, 2018. METAR financial assistance benefits expire December 31, 2019.

The TSA program is designed to provide a bridge for survivors from large group sheltering situations to interim or long-term housing options that are provided by FEMA, other federal agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Additionally, FEMA announced earlier this month that Transportation Assistance for Puerto Rico disaster survivors who are on the U.S. mainland was extended until August 30. Survivors have until August 30 to take advantage of FEMA’s Transportation Assistance program, which covers the cost of airfare, luggage and a stipend toward pet transportation fees for their return to Puerto Rico.

All climate refugee households and individuals seeking stable housing and other benefits must be referred to local Family Resource Center (FRC) agencies for assessment and assistance. It is crucial that career center staff continue to provide refugees with contact information and directions for FRC access and continue to follow a co-case management model with FRCs and DTA field offices when necessary.

Households without children under 18 currently in hotel placements will be provided with a Massachusetts Hurricane Recovery Resources for Evacuee packet that provides information on local shelters, services for Veterans, the elderly and persons with disabilities. This can also be obtained via the following websites: <https://www.frcma.org/> or <http://mass211.org/>.

All climate refugee families with children under the age of 18 currently in hotel placements will continue to be provided temporary accommodations in hotels through the new Massachusetts Evacuee Transitional Assistance Reserve (METAR), funded by the Commonwealth in coordination with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). In most cases, eligible climate refugee families will remain in their current hotel placements. If a family’s current hotel is no longer available, efforts will be made to find accommodations in close proximity to their existing location.

Beyond the families with children under the age of 18, a small number of adult individuals, who have already been identified as having severe medical issues,

will be provided with an extension of their temporary hotel accommodation through METAR while their medical issues can be evaluated and appropriate placements secured.

Both medically dependent individuals AND families with children under the age of 18 will continue receiving these benefits through August 7, 2018.

In support of all evacuees, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has contracted with its Regional Administering Agencies (RAA), with funding coordinated through MEMA, to provide housing search assistance to eligible Hurricane Maria evacuees, whether currently in hotel units or in the community, who are at-risk of homelessness.

A flexible financial resource may be made available under METAR to all eligible climate refugees. Information about this METAR benefit, including the eligibility criteria, is available through the local Regional Administering Agencies (RAAs). These funds are available to families and individuals to assist them in housing stabilization.

Please see Attachment A for a complete description of:

- (1) The amount and availability of the METAR Financial Assistance Benefit and
- (2) The allowable usages of these funds

The goal of the workforce system is to continue to support evacuees as much as possible, while relying on partner agencies and FRCs to connect refugees to community resources that will help them to secure stable housing. The METAR benefits are listed in Attachment A and provided for informational purposes only.

**Action  
Required**

Please ensure that appropriate individuals are aware of this information.

**Inquiries:**

Please contact Allison McIntyre at [allison.mcintyre@detma.org](mailto:allison.mcintyre@detma.org) with questions.

**Attachment:** A. METAR (Massachusetts Evacuee Temporary Assistance Reserve) Benefits