



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
**Department of Housing and
Community Development**



Eviction Diversion Initiative

Dear Partners,

As promised, May and June have not slowed down at DHCD, and I am eager to bring our stakeholders up to speed.

This week, the State of Emergency officially ended – after more than 450 days!

It is incredible to see the COVID-19 numbers drop dramatically with climbing vaccination rates. However, we know that our work is not over. This morning, Governor Baker signed into law a number of important legislative extensions, including the ‘Chapter 257’ eviction protections. These extended protections include expanded Notice to Quit (NTQ) information and the requirement for a landlord to file NTQs with the state, and the ability for courts to delay an eviction if a rental assistance application is in process.

Even with the end of the official State of Emergency, our resources will continue to be available. This includes deep financial assistance, free/low-cost legal aid, and community mediation.

We are keenly aware of the continued economic and health repercussions in our communities, and we are excited that with federal funding, we are now able to make **up to 18 months in rental assistance** available to eligible tenants and landlords. Funds can be used for arrearages accrued after March 13, 2020, and for future rent payments. This longer timetable reflects the very real, continued effects of COVID-19.

Our system continues to handle thousands of applications every week, and in May, we distributed \$33.8 million to 11,797 unique households – a new record! This year we have spent nearly \$127 million in rental assistance, helping more than 21,000 households. And despite these incredible numbers, we still have hundreds of millions available for assistance.

We’ve also cut the first checks through the [Subsidized Housing Emergency Rental Assistance \(SHERA\) program](#) to help our affordable housing property owners and tenants remain stable and address arrearages over the last year. This program is going to help us secure tenancies for hundreds of tenants at once, and will take pressure off tenants and property owners.

Learn more about the [SHERA program](#), including training recordings, on the [SHERA Tenant Advocate website](#).

Additionally, we continue to offer trainings to advocates and community based organizations who want to help clients connect with our programs. [Please check out our guides](#) in multiple languages, and document checklists to help tenants submit complete applications. Complete applications will be processed faster, and we encourage clients and advocates to get their documents together before they complete an application.

We know this continues to be a challenging time for thousands of households in Massachusetts. Thank you for your dedication as we work towards a shared goal: healthy families and shared prosperity in every part of the state. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Ryan Ambrose, ryan.ambrose@mass.gov with any questions.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Maddox

For additional resources, you can visit the Department of Housing & Community Development website [here](#).

DHCD Eviction Diversion Initiative Updates & News

DHCD Dashboard

Have you seen the [Eviction Diversion Initiative Dashboard \(LINK\)](#)? The Dashboard has been updated for the month and includes monthly summary statistics about the Massachusetts COVID-19 Eviction Diversion Initiative. How you can use the dashboard:

1. Visit the [Eviction Diversion Initiative Dashboard \(LINK\)](#) and select the EDI Program and date range
2. Hover your mouse over bars, lines, and other data points to prompt a small pop-up box that will help to explain the information and use the toggles to change the view for that chart
3. We recommend viewing the dashboard in “full screen mode”

Online Resources and Training

- Visit the [EDI Portal](#) for our new [web-based, interactive training session](#) on the Federal Emergency Rental Assistance (ERAP) program. This 20-minute, self-paced training module will go over the major policy guidelines and discuss how to submit an ERAP application. It is intended for the housing community to understand the ERAP program in more detail.
- You can also visit our [Public Information Campaign](#) page to find guides to application best practices in multiple languages, sample social media posts, public service announcements in English and Spanish, and other materials for public distribution to raise awareness about housing assistance. **Information is much more effective when it comes from a trusted source, and we encourage you to continue sharing these resources.**

Policy/Program

- ERAP is now serving households across Massachusetts, and continues to serve the vast majority of applicants.

- ERAP can now cover up to 18 months of rental assistance, both in arrearages and future rent stipends for qualified applicants. All arrearages must be from after March 2020.
- \$33.8 million was distributed in May 2021, bringing the total 2021 fund distribution to \$126.9 million.
- RAFT and ERMA will continue to be available for households, including low-income homeowners, who may not qualify for federal funds.
- Shelter entries and caseloads remain below figures from the prior year. Similarly, HomeBASE and rapid rehousing programs are currently undersubscribed.

Legal Services & Mediation

- The COVID Eviction Legal Help Program (CEHLP) continues to provide legal aid, advice, and legal assistance including full representation for qualified tenants and low-income homeowners with rental units (through the Volunteer Lawyers Project).
- As courts continue to open, we are working with our legal aid partners to ensure lawyer-of-the-day capacity for tenants and low-income owner-occupants.
- We encourage partners to share information about free legal aid for renters who may have received a Notice to Quit, a court summons, or are concerned about a potential eviction. More information at <https://evictionlegalhelp.org/>
- Similarly, the Housing Mediation Program (HMP) continues to have a high rate of success with tenants and landlords who take advantage of professional mediation. This can be a vital tool to help tenants and landlords find a common solution.
- HMP has capacity to take on additional cases, and community partners are encouraged to continue making referrals and spreading the word about this resource. More information at <https://www.resolutionma.org/housing>