



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Emergency Assistance (EA) Commission

Meeting 2
August 19, 2024



Agenda



- **[5 min] Introduction, Review & Approval of Last Meeting Notes, Preview of Upcoming Sessions**
- **[15 min] Review of Temporary Respite Center Model**
- **[15 min] Overview of Diversions and Exits Support**
- **[15 min] Long-Term System Planning**
- **[45 min] Discussion of Long-Term System Planning**



Summary of Kick-Off and Upcoming Agenda

Questions & Topics to Address – Summary from Kick-Off

- How do we make the EA program more **efficient and sustainable**?
- Where are families exiting to, and how do we better provide **exit opportunities**?
- How do we move EA towards **fiscal & operational sustainability**?
- How are we developing **regional strategies** to address homelessness?
- How can we best match **service delivery** to the needs of different populations?
- How are we facilitating **work authorization** for new arrival families and connecting them with employment opportunities?
- How can we ensure we integrate learnings from this crisis into a **future EA plan** for scaling the system up/down?

Month	Session Topic
August	Temporary Respite Center Model Updates on Diversion & Exits
September	Work authorization & employment
October	RA and CBO engagement; Provider regional model
November	Wrap Up & Next Steps



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Focus for today

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Temporary Respite Center Model



Current State of Emergency Assistance (EA) Family Shelter System

Since January 2023, the EA shelter program has doubled and demand outpaces our supply of available shelter beds. In parallel, we face rising operational and fiscal constraints.

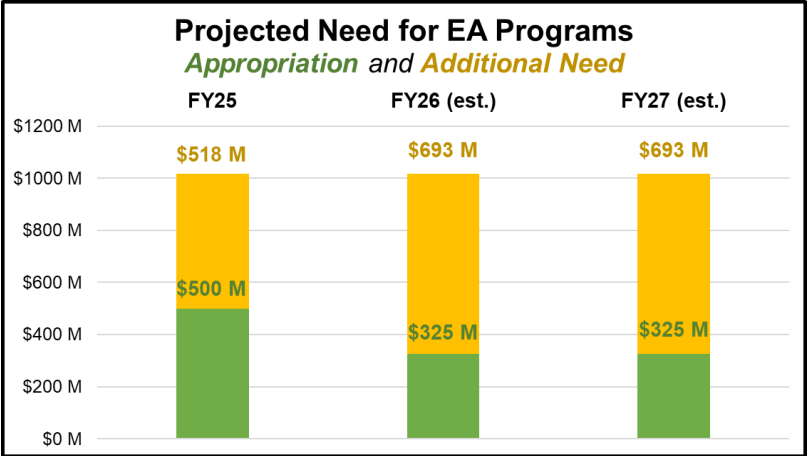
The Administration’s goal is to ensure shelter for families is **temporary, supportive, and non-recurring**.

Operational Constraints

Current Monthly Demand ~400 families
Current Monthly Exits ~330 families
Current Waitlist ~750 families

- Current demand outpaces our ability to sustainably expand the system, including Temporary Respite Centers

Fiscal Constraints



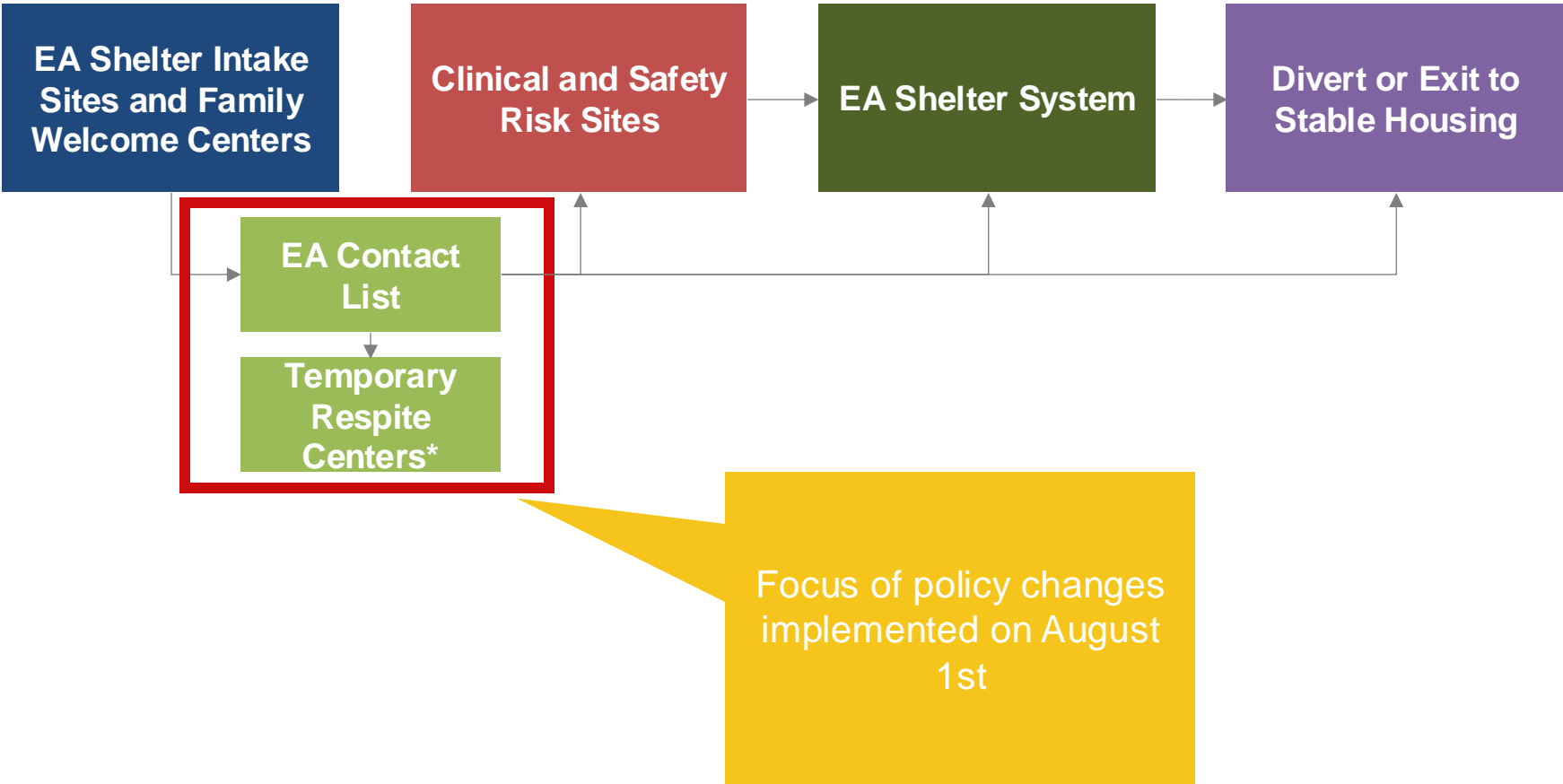
- Legislature has appropriated \$1.4 billion for the EA program since Nov. 2022, but one-time funding sources (Transitional Escrow Fund, “TEF”) are running out
- EA program is projected to cost over \$1 billion in FY25.
- Continued spending at current caseload, level of services, and continued GAA appropriation without TEF leads to large out-year General Fund needs



Types of Shelter in EA Ecosystem

Current EA ecosystem includes three types of sites with different time limits for families.

EA Family Journey





Contact List and Temporary Respite Center Updates

As a result of continued pressure on our system – fiscally and operationally – the Administration implemented changes to the contact list prioritization criteria and a new Temporary Respite Center model in place of the previous overflow site model.

Contact List Prioritization Changes:

- **Continue:** Prioritize families who have significant medical needs, are at risk of domestic violence, or are homeless because of fire, flood, or other disasters
- **New:** Families rendered homeless due to no-fault evictions, who have at least one family member who is a veteran, or who are aging out of a DCF Young Parent Living Program will now also be prioritized
- Families who are prioritized will continue to have access to Clinical & Safety Risk Assessment (CSR) sites prior to placement into EA

Temporary Respite Center Time Limits:

- Families with lower priority for EA placement (P4) will be eligible to stay at a “Temporary Respite Center” (formerly overflow site)
- Families who choose this option will:
 - Receive a stay of 5 full business days, and
 - Forego placement on the EA contact list (formerly waitlist) for six months
- All families eligible for EA will continue to remain eligible for diversion services, including reticketing

Intensive Case Management

Family Flyer with Contact List and Resources Information

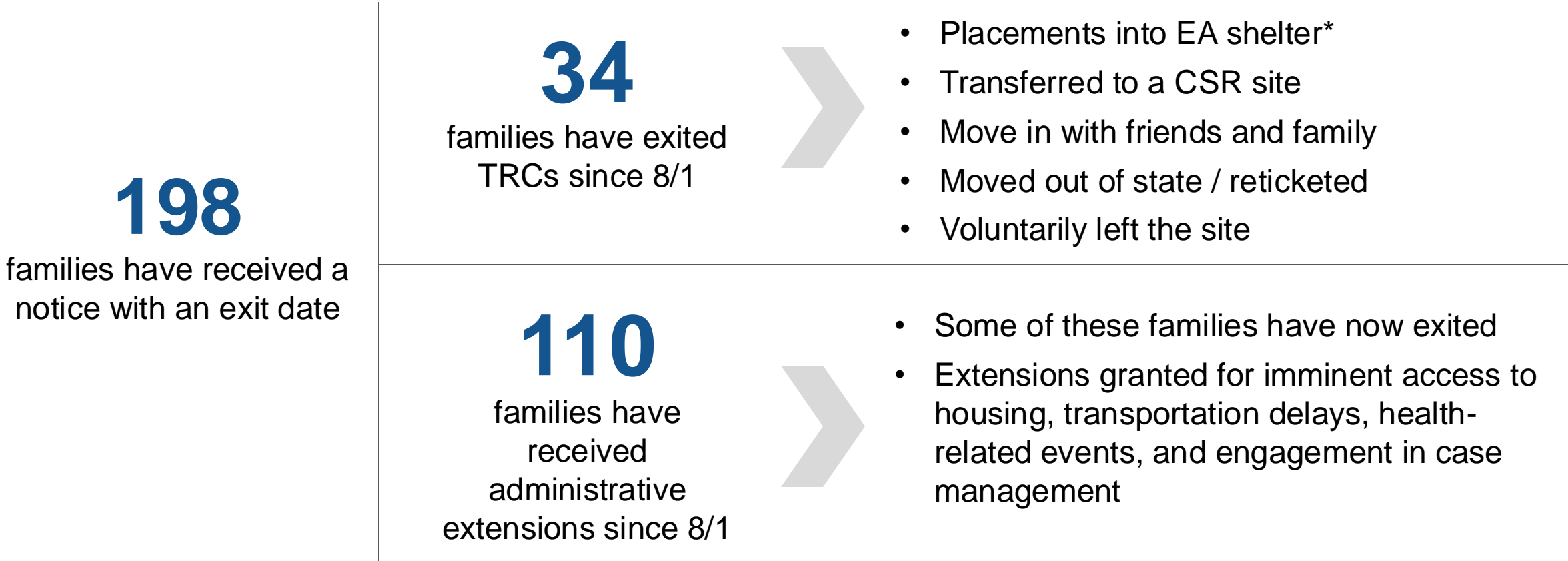
Website and FAQs:
mass.gov/EAContactList

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TRC Family Data

Families affected by TRC policy have begun exiting to alternative locations. TRC providers are providing intensive case management to families at TRC sites and supporting them in identifying their next step and developing an exit plan.



**Families were on EA contact list prior to 8/1 and were not subject to 6-month exclusion from EA contact list*



Support for Diversion and Exits



Diversion and Exits Supports

Across our system, we provide robust support for families in accessing diversion and supportive services as they plan their next steps.



Diversion resources

including access to HomeBASE and other diversion programs and reticketing to other states



Services including basic needs, public benefits enrollment assistance, legal assistance, & health screenings



Intensive case management focused on connecting family to their support networks and stable housing



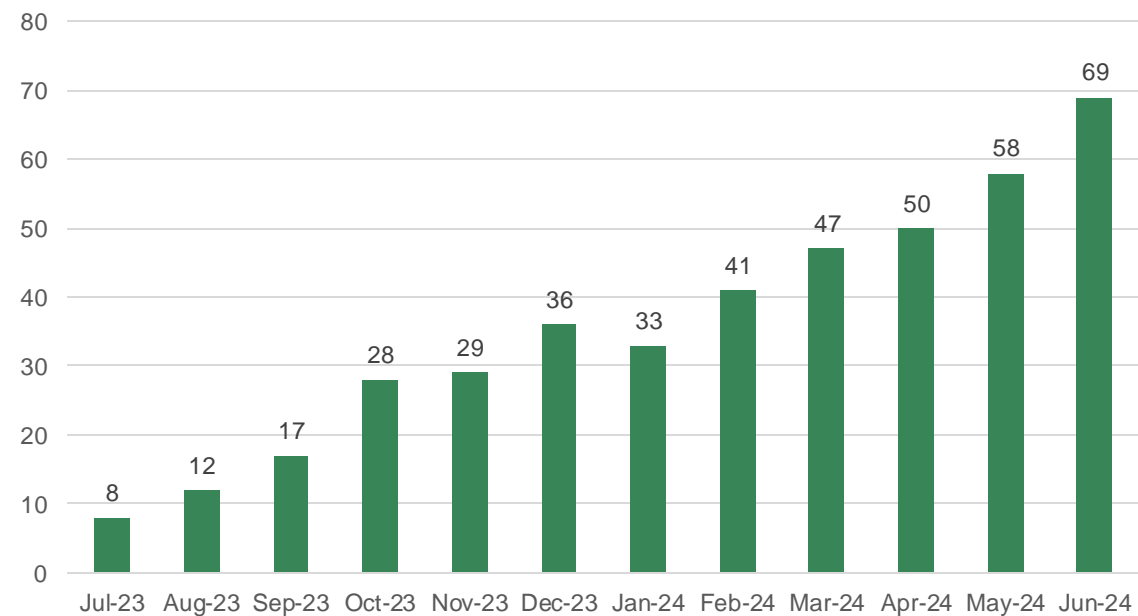
Employment support including applying for work authorization permits, if needed, and connecting to training programs and job opportunities



Diversion and Exits Support

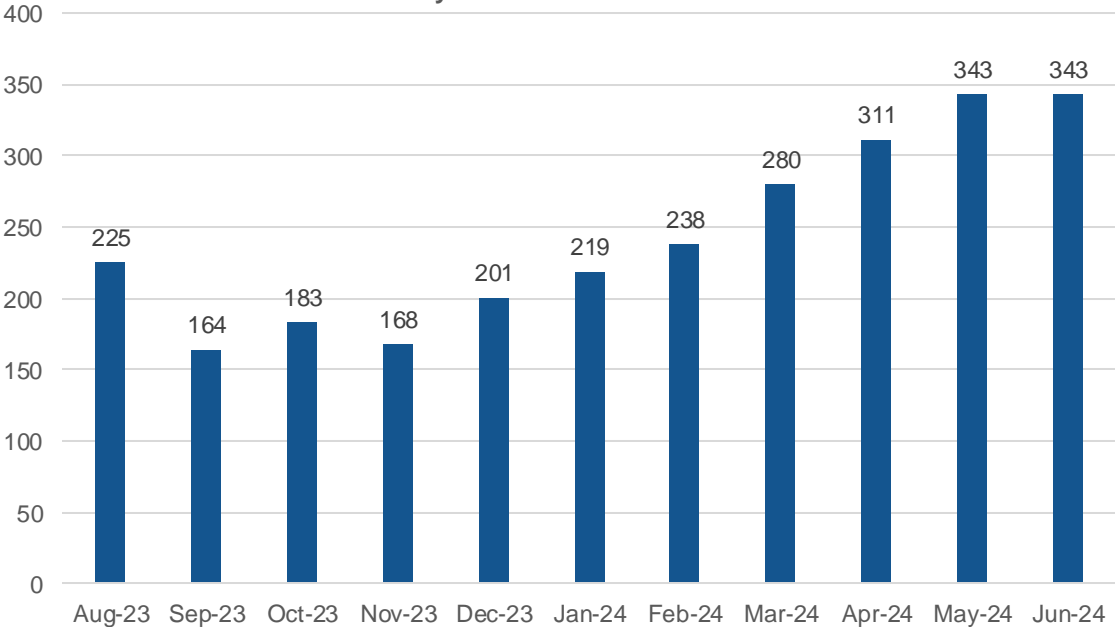
Diversions, shelter exits, and employment support are critical pieces of a sustainable EA system, and the administration is directing support to increasing these tools for families to access stable housing.

HomeBASE Enrollments through Diversion



- 428 Families have been able to access stable housing by enrolling in HomeBASE through diversion services over the last 12 months.

Monthly Exits From Shelter



- There has been an increase in shelter exits over the last months as well, with a majority exiting either with a housing voucher and/or through EOHLC’s HomeBASE program into stable housing.



Emergency Assistance Shelter Exit Efforts

We have a few primary tools to help families exit shelter, and we know these tools have been an important part of the increase in exit numbers over the last year.

Tools for Shelter Exit

HomeBASE

- \$45,000 for up to three years for rental stipends, costs of securing a unit, moving costs, furniture, utilities.
- Stabilization assistance from case workers.

Housing Subsidy

- An ongoing voucher that provides rental assistance for families.
- Families pay 30% of their income towards rent.

Flexible Funds

- Providers can deploy these funds quickly to help a family secure or maintain stable housing.
- Often used for unit holding payments, first and last month's rent, moving costs, stabilization.

69% of exits in 2024 have utilized HomeBASE

44% of exits in 2024 have utilized housing subsidies

27% of exits in 2024 have utilized flexible funds

*Some families use multiple tools during exit, so these percentages are not mutually exclusive.

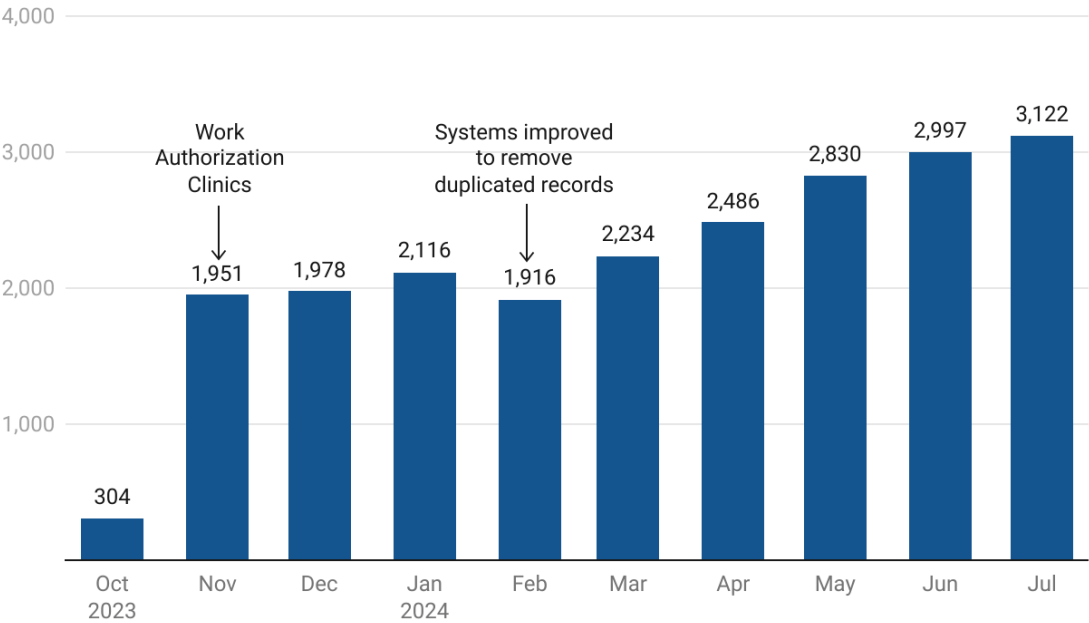


Diversion and Exits Support: Employment Data

We are approaching 3,400 work authorization approvals for new arrival families in Massachusetts and working with employers and to provide employment and training opportunities.

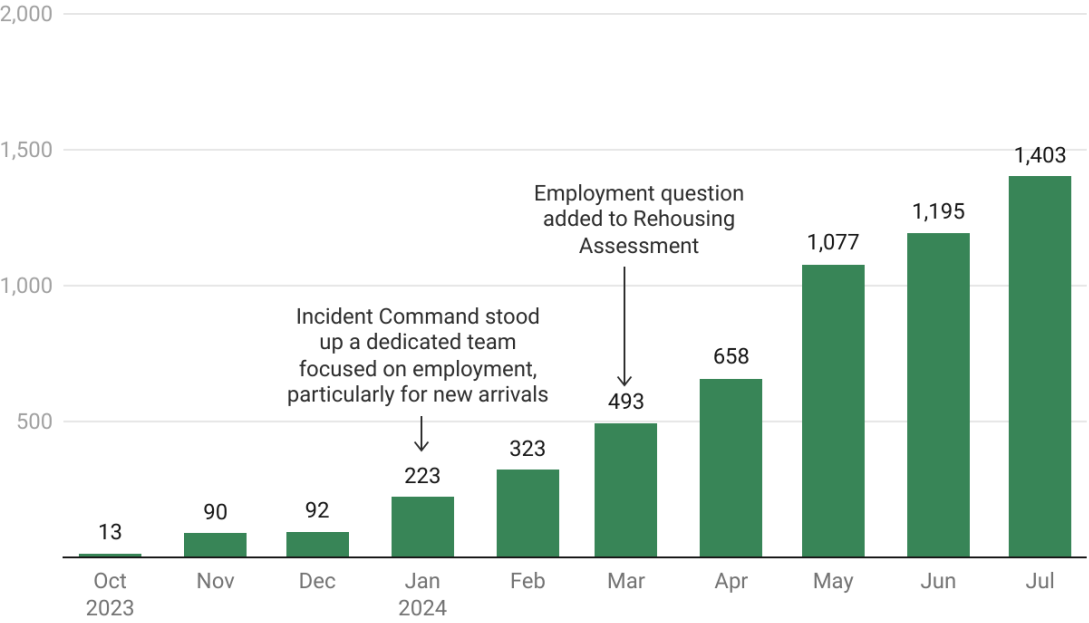
Work Authorization for Migrant EA Shelter Residents

EA residents reporting that they have a work permit by month, excluding US Citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents



Employment for EA Shelter Residents

EA residents reporting employment by month, including migrants, US Citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents



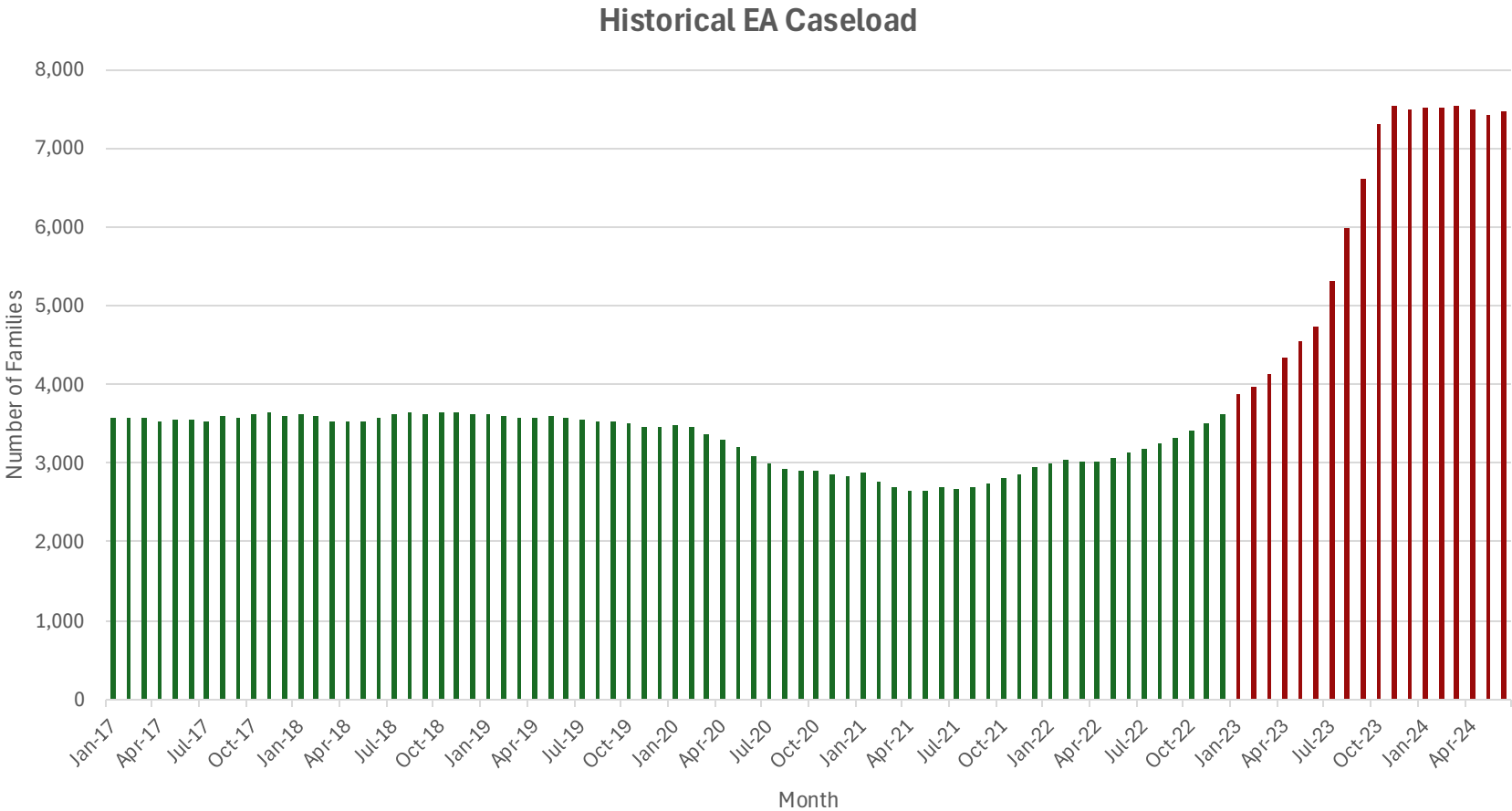


Long-Term System Planning



EA Program History

The EA program historically has served ~4,000 families with average lengths of stays of over 1 year. The program has faced challenges with flexing to meet variable needs amid a tight housing market.



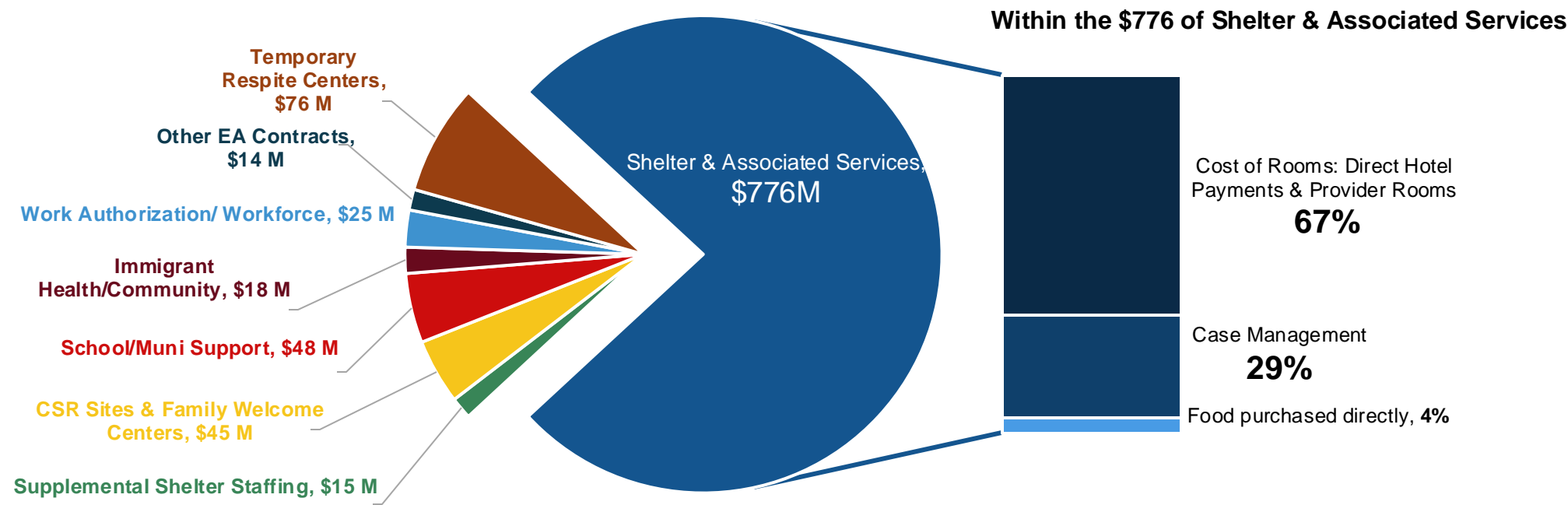
Average Length of Stay	
Calendar Year	Average Length of Stay
2021	455 days
2022	431 days
2023	384 days
2024	365 days

EA Budget	
Fiscal Year	Appropriation (GAA+Supps)
FY2021	\$193.0M
FY2022	\$218.4M
FY2023	\$299.0M
FY2024	\$955.0M



State of Current System

We have expanded the EA Family Shelter system in response to rising demand over the last year and half, but demand has continued to grow. The EA system now requires over \$1B to operate annually.



76% of \$1B EA cost is spent on operating EA shelter.

Without further appropriations, FY25 EA funding is expected to runout on approximately January 1, 2025.



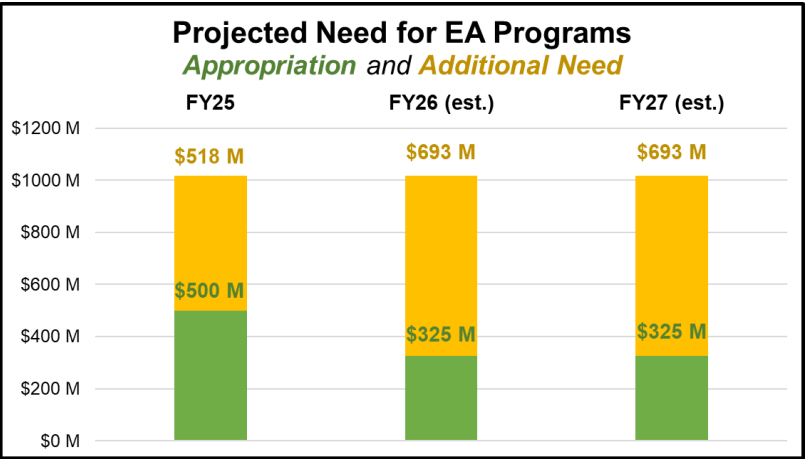
State of Current System

We have made hard policy decisions to address these constraints while providing the best support possible to families in our system.

- November 2023: Waitlist and prioritization due to reaching shelter capacity
- March 2024: Engagement requirements in overflow sites
- July 2024: EA Length of Stay Policy Implemented
- July 2024: End of overnight stays at Logan
- August 2024: Prioritization and TRC Policy Changes

Even with these changes, demand remains high, and we continue to face fiscal and operational constraints.

Current Monthly Demand ~400 families
Current Monthly Exits ~330 families
Current Waitlist ~750 families





Long-Term System Planning - Discussion

Given fiscal and operational constraints, there are two challenges we face.

Short-term: Current Deficiencies and Caseload

We have to continue to make changes to manage the current fiscal year and out-year deficiencies in the face of unsustainable demand.

Long-term: Future of EA Shelter System

We know the system needs reform and need to begin planning for how to make the program sustainable in the long-run.



Focus for EA Commission
report



EA Family Shelter System Vision

As we begin planning for the Commission report, we want to align on a mission for what we'd like the EA program to be in the future. Words we currently use to describe the mission of the EA program include **rare, brief, and non-recurring**.

What other key principles should we consider as we envision the future of EA?

Rare

- How do we ensure all stakeholders, including families, share expectations for shelter being rare and for emergency situations?
- How do we improve homelessness prevention and shelter diversion tools so families can avoid entering shelter?

Brief

- How do we meet the needs of different family populations?
- How do we provide intensive case management to support families in rapidly rehousing?
- Should we maintain a Length of Stay policy for the EA program after the crisis?

Non-Recurring

- How do we support families on a path to stable housing as they leave shelter?