Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities Division of Housing Stabilization
Emergency Assistance ("EA") Program Guidance on Six-Month Length of Stay Date of Issuance: June 12, 2024
Updated: November 5, 2025

In February 2025, the Massachusetts Legislature established a 6-month time limit on a family's eligibility for EA Family Shelter, amending the prior 9-month limit.[1] This guidance is issued by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities ("EOHLC") to establish procedures implementing the 6-month limit on EA eligibility for EA bridge shelter, including criteria used to determine whether a family qualifies for a one-time hardship waiver.

This guidance will be in effect for as long as a Declaration, as may be extended, remains in effect pursuant to 760 CMR 67.10. This guidance supplements but does not replace existing EOHLC regulations.

1. Six-Month Limit and Extensions
    a. Families will be eligible for EA bridge shelter for up to 6 consecutive[2] months, starting from the date the family was first placed into EA shelter[3].

    b. Families will receive at least 180 days' notice before their eligibility for bridge shelter ends.
        i. Families who are placed in shelter on or after April 11, 2025 will receive an Exit Date Notice when they are first placed into shelter.

        ii. Families already in shelter before April 11, 2025 who have not already received notice of their exit date will receive this exit date notice at any point while in shelter. The date that a family must exit shelter, which is either their previously noticed exit date or the last day of the 6-month period of eligibility for EA bridge shelter, is referred to in this guidance as a length of stay limit ("LOS Limit").

    c. In limited circumstances, a family may request additional time to remain in shelter on the basis of a qualifying hardship, as specified in Section 2 of this guidance. If the family applies and is found to have a qualifying hardship, they will remain eligible for EA shelter for an additional 35 days. This hardship-

[1] Section 3 of chapter 1 of the acts of 2025 amended G.L. c. 23B, § 30, which is the statute governing the EA program.
[2] Any period after initial placement during which a family is eligible for shelter will count towards the family's 6-month period, even if the family's placement in an EA shelter is interrupted, such as through an approved Temporary Emergency Shelter Interruption ("TESI").
[3] The date of placement into EA shelter is calculated from the date that a family is placed into a shelter unit or hotel/motel unit funded by EOHLC under item 7004-0101 of the state budget, following an initial eligibility determination by EOHLC. Placement at a Temporary Respite Center, shall constitute "placement" for purposes of calculating the 6-month shelter limit.

based extension is referred to in this guidance and publicly as a "Hardship Waiver."

d. A family that has imminent placement in housing may be eligible to remain in shelter for up to an additional 42 days, as specified in Section 3 of this guidance. This type of extension is referred to as a "Lease Bridge." To be eligible for a Lease Bridge, the family must have a signed lease or equivalent, as defined in Section 3, with a start date within the additional 42 days after the LOS Limit.
    i. A family is eligible for a Lease Bridge whether or not they have been granted a Hardship Waiver.

e. A family's EA shelter benefit may be terminated if the family does not comply with case management and rehousing efforts (including its 60-day Rehousing Assessment) for any 60-day period.

f. No more than 250 families will be terminated from EA bridge shelter by EOHLC for overstaying their LOS limit in any week.

2. Hardship Waivers
    a. A family may apply for an extension on the basis of a qualifying hardship. EOHLC may approve extensions of 35 days. Families may receive only one Hardship Waiver. To qualify for a Hardship Waiver, a family must show the presence of one of the following:

        i. A family member who is under 6 years of age (5 years and 364 days or younger) at the time of the family's LOS Limit;

        ii. A family member who is a veteran (as defined in M.G.L. c. 4, s. 7, cl. 43) and who is not enrolled in services specifically tailored to veterans;

        iii. A family member with a documented high-risk pregnancy;

        iv. A family member with a documented disability (defined as a family member with an intellectual or developmental disability as verified by a medical provider; or a family member who receives SSDI or SSI ; or a family member who has a disability as verified by DTA); or

        v. Documented risk of imminent harm due to domestic violence concerns.

    b. Requests for a Hardship Waiver must be submitted on a form or medium provided by EOHLC at least 30 days prior to a family's LOS Limit. Late requests may be accepted at EOHLC's sole discretion with documented good cause.

        i. Good cause may include but is not limited to cases where: (a) a family member was diagnosed with a condition that qualifies for a hardship waiver after the application deadline; (b) a family member was hospitalized, or; (c) a family member passed away.

c. As part of the waiver request process, families may be required to undergo a clinical evaluation to assess whether they meet one of the criteria. Families may choose how they have their assessment completed:
    i. In-person at the Clinical and Safety Risk Assessment site. Transportation will be provided by the EA shelter provider.

    ii. Through their own medical provider. Families must give permission for their provider to share the results of the assessment with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Rapid Response Team.

    iii. Virtually through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Rapid Response Team. Families must have a U.S. phone number to utilize this option.

d. EOHLC may contact an applicable state agency or other organization to verify that the family meets one of the criteria

e. Families will receive a written notice of EOHLC's determination of the Hardship Waiver request.

f. Applications indicating numerous eligible criteria will only be granted a waiver on the basis of a single criterion. Only one Hardship Waiver will be granted regardless of numbers of criteria that qualify a family for a waiver.

    i. Waivers will be approved if a family has a family member under 6 years of age, regardless of the criteria indicated on the application.

3. Extraordinary Circumstances Waiver
    a. HLC may provide an up-to-35-day extraordinary circumstances waiver within 30 days of a family's LOS limit if the following extraordinary circumstances have occurred that would prevent a family from safely exiting on their LOS limit.
        i. Death of an immediate family member within 30 days of the LOS limit.
        ii. A sudden and serious health emergency as determined by EOHLC, such as hospitalization, that is beyond the control of the applicant or recipient and would reasonably prevent a person from exiting shelter by their LOS limit.

    b. Prior to providing an extraordinary circumstances waiver, HLC may require a family to provide documentation as determined by EOHLC, including but not necessarily limited to:
        i. A copy of death notice or a written statement from a treating physician outlining the sudden and serious health emergency;
        ii. A written statement from the recipient that explains the sudden and serious health emergency that prevented the recipient from exiting shelter; or
        iii. Other appropriate verification determined by EOHLC.

c. HLC may provide an extraordinary circumstances waiver to families that have already received a hardship waiver and/or a lease bridge.

4. Lease Bridge
   a. A family may apply for a Lease Bridge, which will provide up to 42 additional days in shelter based on imminent placement in housing.

   b. This up to 42-day extension may be in addition to the 35 days granted by a Hardship Waiver, if a family meets the eligibility criteria for both.

   c. Requests for a Lease Bridge must be submitted on a form or medium provided byEOHLC prior to the family's LOS limit.

   d. To qualify for a Lease Bridge, a family must provide documentation of imminent placement in housing EOHLC will accept only the following documents as proof of imminent placement in housing:
      i. A lease that is signed by both the tenant and the landlord with a lease start date within 42 days, or;
      ii. For a family that is approved to move into an apartment funded by a project-based voucher, promissory documentation from the property manager or owner clearly documenting the family is approved to move into the unit within 42 days, or;
      iii. For a family that is approved to move into a state or federal public housing unit, promissory documentation from the property manager or owner clearly documenting the family is approved to move into the unit within 42 days.

   e. If a Lease Bridge request does not include at least one of the forms of required documentation listed in Section 3.d, the request will be denied.

5. Request to Reconsider
   a. If a family applies for a Hardship Waiver and is denied, that family may submit one request for a Hardship Waiver reconsideration, with additional information and supporting documents.

      i. Requests for a Hardship Waiver reconsideration must be submitted on a form or medium provided by EOHLC with a copy of the family's Hardship Waiver denial.

      ii. Requests for a Hardship Waiver reconsideration will only be considered if they are received within 7 days of the family's Hardship Waiver denial.

      iii. Requests for a Hardship Waiver reconsideration will be granted only if the request provides additional information and supporting documents showing that (1) the family met at least one of the criteria for a Hardship Waiver at the time of their original request for Hardship Waiver, or (2) the family's circumstances have changed and the family now meets at least one of the

criteria for a Hardship Waiver.

iv. Families will receive a written notice of EOHLC's determination of the Hardship Waiver request for reconsideration.

b. If a family applies for a Lease Bridge and is denied, that family may submit one request for a Lease Bridge reconsideration, with additional information and supporting documents.

i. Requests for a Lease Bridge reconsideration must be submitted on a form or medium provided by EOHLC with a copy of the family's Lease Bridge denial.

ii. Requests for a Lease Bridge reconsideration will only be considered if they are received within 7 days of the family's Lease Bridge denial.

iii. Requests for a Lease Bridge reconsideration will be granted only if the request provides additional information and supporting documents showing that (1) the family met at least one of the criteria for a Lease Bridge at the time of their original application, or (2) the family's circumstances have changed and the family now meets at least one of the criteria for a Lease Bridge.

iv. Families will receive a written notice of EOHLC's determination of the Lease Bridge request for reconsideration.

6. Delivery of Notices

a. All notices issued to families under this guidance will be delivered by the EA shelter provider to the family's last shelter address and electronically by email, if one has been provided by the family to the EA shelter provider. The notice will be considered delivered to the family on the earlier date that occurs between physical and email delivery.

7. Re-application for EA Shelter

a. Families who leave their EA shelter unit on or before the last day of their LOS limit (as extended) may re-apply for shelter immediately, subject to contact list and prioritization process, and will not be subject to the 12-month bar on EA eligibility under 760 CMR 67.06(1)(d)1.