

MRVP Frequently Asked Questions

Contents

- General MRVP Questions..... 1
- Homeless Priorities 3
 - Verifying a Permanent Residence..... 4
 - Verifying Homelessness 5
 - Homeless Due to Fire or Natural Disaster 5
 - Homeless Due to Urban Renewal 6
 - Homeless Due to State Sanitary or Other Code Violations..... 6
 - Homeless Due to No Fault Housing Loss..... 7
 - Homeless Due to Severe Medical Emergency 8
 - Homeless Due to Abusive Situation..... 9
- Local Preference 11
- Application and CHAMP Questions..... 12

General MRVP Questions

- ? What does MRVP mean?
 - o Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program.

- ? What is MRVP?
 - o MRVP is a housing voucher program. Participants pay about 30% of their income in rent, and the voucher pays the rest of the rent. If they have no income, they pay no rent. If their income is \$1,000 a month, they pay \$300 in rent.

- ? What is a mobile voucher?
 - o A mobile or tenant-based voucher is a housing voucher that moves with the household. Participants with a mobile voucher are given 180 days to find a suitable unit in MA. If they move, the voucher moves with them.

- ? What is a project-based voucher?



- A project-based voucher is a housing voucher that is attached to a specific unit or property. Participants with a project-based voucher can only live at a certain property. If they move, they will most likely lose their voucher.

? How is MRVP different from Section 8?

- Section 8 or the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) is a federally funded voucher program. Section 8 and MRVP are very similar.

One difference is that Section 8 verifies immigration status. At least one household member must have an acceptable immigration status to be eligible. MRVP does not verify immigration status.

Another difference is that you can use Section 8 throughout the United States. MRVP can only be used within Massachusetts.

? Is MRVP the same as public housing?

- No. Public housing is specific properties owned by a housing authority. But MRVP project-based vouchers are like public housing, because the subsidy is tied to a specific unit.

? Do all housing authorities have the MRVP?

- No. Only some housing authorities have MRVP. Regional housing agencies also have MRVP. You can find your [local housing agency here](#).

Any housing authority can help you apply in [CHAMP](#), even if they don't have MRVP. You can return a paper application to any housing authority, even if they don't have MRVP.

? Am I eligible for MRVP?

- The income limit is [80% Area Median Income \(AMI\)](#).

Find where you live in the [chart here](#), and then read over for the annual income limit for your household size. If your income is over, you may still be eligible. MRVP looks at your income after program deductions and exclusions are applied.

? What are other eligibility requirements?

- Your criminal record and whether you are required to register as a sex offender will be reviewed. MRVP only considers drug and violent crimes. Even if you have a criminal record, you can still be eligible.

There is an asset limit at eligibility. Your history in subsidized housing will be reviewed.



If you have specific questions, apply anyway or contact your [local housing agency](#).

- ? Should I apply? I don't think I'm eligible.
 - You should apply. At worst, you are denied assistance. Waiting lists can be very long, and your situation may be different when you are actually screened for MRVP.

- ? I'm a single person who's not disabled or elderly. Am I eligible?
 - You do not need to be elderly, disabled, or part of a family to be eligible for MRVP.

- ? Do I need to have IDs, birth certificate, and a Social Security card to apply?
 - You can apply for any housing at any time. Eligible applicants will need a government-issued photo ID, birth certificate, or a social security card. If you don't have at least one of those, try to get a copy.

- ? How long do I have to wait before I get a voucher?
 - This depends on many things, like if you qualify for a homeless priority. Unfortunately, waiting lists are very long. Many applicants wait years for a voucher.

Homeless Priorities

MRVP has four homeless priorities. They are based on the reason you became homeless or are at imminent risk of homelessness. You can find a helpful chart [here](#). MRVP's homeless priorities apply to applicants who are homeless due to:

1. Fire or natural disaster;
2. Urban renewal;
3. State sanitary or other code violations;
- 4a. No fault loss of housing
- 4b. Severe medical emergency;
- 4c. Abusive situation.

If you are homeless for another reason, you will not qualify for a homeless priority for MRVP.

If you claim homelessness in the CHAMP application, the Centralized Screening Office will reach out to you to verify your homeless status. You can find a summary [here](#).

If you think you qualify for a homeless priority, apply. The Centralized Screening Office will work with you. They can tell you what documents you need to provide and if you're eligible. This helpful [sheet](#) is an overview, but every situation is unique.



- ? Do I need a priority to get housing?
 - No. A homeless priority will get you housing faster, but you can still be offered housing without one.
- ? I'm in an Emergency Assistance shelter or on a Continuum of Care list. Do I qualify for the priority?
 - Maybe. MRVP looks at why you became homeless.
- ? Are these the same priorities as state public housing?
 - Yes, MRVP, state public housing, and the Alternative Housing Voucher Program all use the same priorities. If you're approved as a homeless priority, it applies to all programs in CHAMP.
- ? Can I talk to the Centralized Screening Office to find out if I'm eligible before I apply?
 - The Centralized Screening Office cannot review your situation unless you have applied and claimed a homeless priority. If you think you may qualify for a homeless priority, apply.
- ? Is there a time limit on how long I've been out of my permanent housing or how long I've been homeless?
 - In general, no, it doesn't matter how long you've been homeless.
- ? I still have questions.
 - If you think you qualify for a homeless priority, you should apply. The Centralized Screening Office will work with you to see if you qualify for a homeless preference.

Verifying a Permanent Residence

- ? How do I verify my permanent residence?
 - You can submit letters from your landlord, lease, rent checks, utility bills, other official mail, proof of a child's enrollment in school, or various other things.
- ? I don't have any of the things listed to prove my permanent residence.
 - Every applicant claiming a homeless priority has to somehow verify their last permanent address (the one they were displaced from). There are lots of ways to do this. The Centralized Screening Office will work with you to verify your specific situation.
- ? I've never had a primary residence.



- That is tricky. Unfortunately, some applicants wouldn't be able to show displacement from a primary residence.
- ? Does a nursing facility count as a primary residence?
 - Generally, the Centralized Screening Office considers someone in a nursing facility to be temporarily housed. To qualify for a homeless priority, though, the applicant still needs to show why they were displaced from their last primary residence.

Verifying Homelessness

- ? How do I verify I'm homeless if I'm not in shelter?
 - You can verify homelessness or temporary housing with a letter from the person you're temporarily living with. You can also submit a letter from a professional like a social worker, school counselor, police officer, clergy, or doctor.
- ? I live in a tent in the woods. How do I verify that?
 - Homelessness could be verified by a case manager, outreach worker, police officer, or another knowledgeable person.
- ? I've been staying in motel and have to go from one to the other because the motels only allow so many days. Does this count as "homeless"?
 - Yes. You can show your hotel receipts to establish temporary housing.
- ? I'm doubled up. My family shares an apartment with another family and lives in one bedroom. Does this count?
 - The Centralized Screening Office would consider being doubled up as temporarily housed. You can provide a letter from the person you are doubled up with or a knowledgeable professional.
- ? I'm in a halfway house and being asked to leave.
 - The Centralized Screening Office considers applicants in halfway houses to be temporarily housed. You will still need to show why you were displaced from your last primary residence.

Homeless Due to Fire or Natural Disaster

- ? What qualifies as a natural disaster?
 - Fires, floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes all qualify as a natural disaster.



- ? I'm homeless because of a natural disaster that wasn't in Massachusetts and was several years ago.
 - It doesn't matter where your home was or how long ago the disaster took place. You just need to show that you're homeless and have been homeless because of a natural disaster.
- ? All of my documents were destroyed in the natural disaster.
 - Apply for the homeless priority. The Centralized Screening Office will work with you to verify your homelessness.
- ? I'm homeless because of a house fire. Does it matter what started the fire?
 - Yes. The Centralized Screening Office will verify that you are not responsible for your homelessness. If your actions caused the fire that made you homeless, you will not qualify for the homeless priority.

Homeless Due to Urban Renewal

- ? What is urban renewal?
 - This priority is very uncommon. Urban renewal is defined as "any low rent housing project as defined in M.G.L. c. 121B, a public slum clearance or urban renewal project initiated after January 1, 1947, or other public improvement."

Homeless Due to State Sanitary or Other Code Violations

- ? How do I verify I'm homeless because of state sanitary code violations?
 - You must provide an official order of displacement due to violations of the state sanitary code or other local ordinances.
- ? My unit has a lot of state sanitary code violations. Does that count?
 - No. You must have an official order of displacement. If the local code enforcement agency, like the local board of health, has not forced you to leave, you do not qualify as homeless under this definition. Also, you cannot have caused the violations.
- ? My unit was condemned due to my hoarding disorder. Do I qualify?
 - Homeless due to severe medical emergency includes both physical and mental illnesses. If hoarding, a mental illness, led to displacement or created a living situation that is an immediate threat to health and safety, you could qualify as homeless due to severe medical emergency.
- ? My unit is making me sick, and the board of health won't do anything. Do I qualify?



- Homeless due to severe medical emergency may apply to you depending on the situation. Apply, and the Centralized Screening Office will work with you.

Homeless Due to No Fault Housing Loss

You must have a judgement, eviction, other court order, or agreement of the parties that requires you to leave your primary residence by a specific date and you cannot be at fault.

- ? I have notice to quit. Am I eligible?
 - No. You must have a judgement, eviction, other court order, or agreement of the parties that requires you to leave your primary residence by a specific date and you cannot be at fault.
- ? My owner has told me that I need to leave by a certain date. Am I eligible?
 - No. You must have a judgement, eviction, other court order, or agreement of the parties that requires you to leave your primary residence by a specific date and you cannot be at fault.
- ? I have a court date with my property owner. Am I eligible?
 - No. You must have a judgement, eviction, other court order, or agreement of the parties that requires you to leave your primary residence by a specific date and you cannot be at fault.
- ? I worked with a mediator at housing court and signed an agreement with my property owner that I would leave my unit by a specific date. Am I eligible?
 - As long as your agreement does not state you're at fault, you may be eligible.
- ? What is a no-fault eviction?
 - A no-fault eviction is an eviction where the household didn't violate their lease. It can happen when a lease isn't renewed, current owner wants the property vacant for sale, the new owner wants the property vacant, or the owner wants the unit for personal use.
- ? Does the housing court usually indicate who is at fault?
 - Most court orders will list findings and damages. If the court finds the tenant broke the lease in any way, that would be considered at fault. If the tenant owes damages or back rent for any reason, that would be considered at fault.
- ? I have a court order to leave my unit at a date in the future but am still residing in my primary residence. Do I qualify?
 - Yes, so long as the reason for the agreement is not your fault.



- ? I have an old eviction for non-payment of rent. How old can the debt/judgment be to be considered for a homeless priority?
 - o To qualify as a homeless due to no-fault loss of housing, you cannot have been evicted for fault from your primary residence. An eviction due to back rent/unpaid rent, for whatever reason, would be considered at fault.

- ? My rent went up, and I was evicted for non-payment of rent because I couldn't afford it. Do I qualify for no-fault loss of housing priority?
 - o To qualify as a homeless due to no-fault loss of housing, you cannot have been evicted for fault from your primary residence. An eviction due to back rent/unpaid rent, for whatever reason, would be considered at fault.

- ? Something happened that wasn't my fault, and I couldn't pay my rent and was evicted. Do I qualify for no-fault loss of housing priority?
 - o To qualify as a homeless due to no-fault loss of housing, you cannot have been evicted for fault from your primary residence. An eviction due to back rent/unpaid rent, for whatever reason, would be considered at fault.

Homeless Due to Severe Medical Emergency

- ? What qualifies as a severe medical emergency?
 - o If you claim this preference, the Centralized Screening Office will send you a form for your doctor or other medical professional to complete. This form will verify that:
 - You have an illness or injury that poses a severe threat to life or safety
AND
 - Your primary residence is or was a cause of the illness or injury or your home is a substantial impediment to recovery from your illness or injury.

- ? I'm disabled and have numerous health concerns. Do I qualify?
 - o Only if your primary residence is the cause of your health concerns or is the reason why you cannot recover.

- ? I was permanently injured and can no longer climb stairs. My unit is on the second floor, and there's no elevator. I manage, but it's really hard. Do I qualify?
 - o Yes. You have a severe injury and your home is a substantial impediment to your recovery.

- ? I'm homeless, and where I'm staying is not healthy for me because of my disability. Do I qualify?



- Only if the reason you were displaced from your primary residence was because it caused your illness or injury or kept you from recovering from your illness or injury.
- ? My doctor doesn't know about my housing, but they do know about my illness. What should I do?
 - Work with your medical provider and the Centralized Screening Office to verify that your housing either caused your illness or injury or is keeping you from recovering.
- ? My unit was condemned due to my hoarding disorder. Do I qualify?
 - Homeless due to severe medical emergency includes both physical and mental illnesses. If hoarding, a mental illness, led to displacement or created a living situation that is an immediate threat to health and safety, you could qualify as homeless due to severe medical emergency.
- ? My unit is making me sick, and the board of health won't do anything. Do I qualify?
 - Homeless due to severe medical emergency may apply to you depending on the situation. Apply, and the Centralized Screening Office will work with you.
- ? I live in a nursing home, but I could leave if I had somewhere to go and set up some supports. Do I qualify?
 - If you displaced from your last permanent residence because you had an illness or injury that poses a severe threat to life or safety and your primary residence was a cause of the illness or injury or your home was a substantial impediment to recovery from your illness or injury, then you may qualify.

Homeless Due to Abusive Situation

- ? What's an "abusive situation"?
 - Abuse is defined by [state law](#). Abuse is one or more of the following acts between family or household members (1) attempting to cause or causing physical harm; (2) placing another in fear of imminent serious physical harm; or (3) causing another to engage involuntarily in sexual relations by force, threat or duress. Abuse also includes sexual assault or stalking, even if the perpetrator was not a family or household member.
- ? Who counts as a "family or household member"?
 - Family or household member is also defined by [state law](#). 'Family or household members' are persons who: (1) are or were married to one another; (2) are or were residing together in the same household; (3) are or were related by blood or marriage; (4) having a child in common regardless of whether they have ever



married or lived together; or (4) are or have been in a substantive dating or engagement relationship, which shall be adjudged by district, probate or Boston municipal courts.

- ? How can I verify the abuse? I never filed a police report or got a restraining order.
 - o You do not need a police report or restraining order. You can verify abusive situations multiple ways. You can submit medical documents, a letter from a social service agency, therapist, social worker, or clergy, or a letter from a close friend.

- ? I told literally no one about the abuse. What do I do?
 - o Apply and work with the Centralized Screening Office. If you cannot provide anything else, you can self-certify to the abuse.

- ? I'm still living with my abuser, but it's not safe. Do I qualify?
 - o Yes. You are at imminent risk of displacement from your home because of an abusive situation.

- ? I can't prove my primary residence because my abuser keeps all of the paperwork and bills. What do I do?
 - o Apply. The Centralized Screening Office will work with you on another way to verify your situation.

- ? I've been homeless for year because of abuse. Is that too long?
 - o No, as long as you've been continually homeless since you were displaced from your primary residence due to an abusive situation.

- ? I'm a victim of domestic violence that did not include any physical violence. Do I qualify?
 - o Unfortunately, no. State law defines abuse as one or more of the following acts between family or household members (1) attempting to cause or causing physical harm; (2) placing another in fear of imminent serious physical harm; or (3) causing another to engage involuntarily in sexual relations by force, threat or duress.

- ? I've been abused in the past, but that's not really why I'm homeless. Do I qualify?
 - o No. Homelessness or imminent displacement must be directly caused by an abusive situation, sexual assault, or stalking.

- ? I'm in an abusive situation and need help NOW.
 - o Call SafeLink at 877-785-2020. [SafeLink](#) is Massachusetts' statewide 24/7 toll-free domestic violence hotline and a resource for anyone affected by domestic or dating violence.



Local Preference

- ? What is local preference?
 - If you live, work, or have a child that attends school in the same community as a housing authority, you will get a local preference at that housing authority. Regional agencies have regional preference, so if you live, work, have a child that attends school in any city/town in the agency's region, you receive a regional preference.

- ? Does a local preference mean I get housing faster?
 - Yes, an applicant with local preference gets offered housing before an applicant without local preference.

- ? Does someone with local preference get housed before someone with a homeless priority?
 - Local preference is applied within the homeless priority. An applicant who is homeless due to a natural disaster with local preference will get offered housing before an applicant who is homeless due to a natural disaster without local preference.

- ? Where I live doesn't have a housing authority or the housing authority doesn't have MRVP. How do I get local preference?
 - You can get local preference based on where you live, work, or have a child attend school. You can also get a regional preference.

- ? I live and work in two different towns. Do I get two different local preferences?
 - Yes.

- ? I have two children, and they each attend school in a different town. Do I get two local preferences?
 - No. You can only claim local preference based on school in one city or town.

- ? I'm homeless. How do I get local preference based on where I live?
 - If an applicant is homeless, they can claim local preference based on where they are sheltered or where they were displaced from.

- ? What about veterans' preference?
 - MRVP does not have a preference for veterans. State-aided public housing and the Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP) do.



Application and CHAMP Questions

- ? What is CHAMP?
- CHAMP is the Common Housing Application for Massachusetts Programs. You can find it at www.mass.gov/CHAMP. CHAMP is the online application for state-aided public housing, the Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP), and MRVP.
- ? How do I do a paper application?
- You can get a paper application from any local housing authority or regional administer agency. You can request one in person or call and ask for one to be mailed to you. You can find your local housing agency [here](#).
- You can also access paper applications on www.mass.gov/MRVP.
- You can submit your paper application to any [housing agency](#).
- ? I need help with CHAMP. Where do I go?
- Any [housing agency](#) can provide basic CHAMP help.
- ? I applied for MRVP years ago. What happens to my application?
- Applicants who have submitted an application to a housing agency in the past will have their application automatically migrated into CHAMP. You will keep your initial application date and time.
- ? Will the housing agency create a login and password for me when they migrate my application?
- No. You can claim your application in CHAMP by [following these instructions](#). If you're not able to claim your application in CHAMP or have questions about accessing it, call the housing agency where you originally applied.
- ? Can a case manager or family member apply in CHAMP for me?
- This is not recommended. Your CHAMP login is an email address. You—the applicant—should have access to that email address.
- ? Is this application able to be saved and returned without having to start the process again?
- Yes! You can save your progress in CHAMP and return later.
- ? On average, how long does it typically take to complete the application from start to finish?
- It depends on numerous factors. If starting from scratch, set aside 30 minutes. You can also save the application in CHAMP and return later.



- ? I don't have a mailing address or I don't get mail, can I be notified of any next steps by email?
 - o Yes! You will automatically be emailed when a letter is sent to you. You can also view any letters through CHAMP.

- ? If I start my application on paper, can I switch to online?
 - o All paper applications are entered into CHAMP by a housing agency. If you submitted a complete paper application, you can claim it by [following these instructions](#). If you already had an existing CHAMP account, the housing agency updated your information.

- ? How do I tell where I am on the waiting list?
 - o You can review where you've applied in CHAMP, but CHAMP cannot show you your specific spot on a waiting list. Waiting lists in CHAMP are dynamic because of priorities and preferences.

- ? Can I add or remove selections in CHAMP?
 - o Yes, you can add or remove selections in CHAMP at any time.

- I see I can upload documents to CHAMP. Who can see those?
 - o If you upload documents related to priority or preference, the Centralized Screening Office will be able to view them. Any other documents are viewable by any housing agency you applied to.

- ? Is there a helpline? I still have questions about CHAMP.
 - o If a [housing agency](#) can't answer your question, for more information, call 1-866-483-6445.

