

FAQ: Increasing EA Exits: HomeBASE and Other Tools
Provider Training 11/21/2023 and 12/5/2023

Questions and Answers

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1. HomeBASE

A. Program Eligibility

Can migrant families in hotels/motels access HomeBASE?

All EA shelter families are eligible for HomeBASE if they have completed an EA application.

Are families who are presumptively eligible for EA and in EA shelter still eligible for HomeBASE?

Yes, presumptively eligible families, living in EA Shelter are eligible for HomeBASE.

Presumptively eligible NOT in EA shelter, are NOT eligible for HomeBASE.

If a family has no income are they still qualified for HomeBASE rental assistance?

As long as the family is EA eligible or in EA shelter, they qualify for HomeBASE.

What is the income cap for a family applying for HomeBASE?

The income cap is 115% of the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG) while they are applying for EA shelter. Once a family is in EA shelter, the income cap is 200% of the FPG.

Are DV shelters eligible for HomeBASE?

Yes, but through a different referral process. When a participant is in DV shelter, the shelter can refer the case for review and the case will be shared with Diversion.

B. Amount of Stipend

How can we manage using HomeBASE if the benefit does not cover rent for a full 24 months?

HomeBASE is not intended to be 100% rent replacement, the program's success depends on engagement in the stabilization plan. Stabilization will focus on housing retention, lease

compliance, and linking families to additional services to increase economic stability and overall well-being.

Do families still need to pay 30% of their income towards rent or are we able to pay 100% of the rent?

A family must still pay a minimum of 30% of their income toward rent. However, families who have no income will be paying 30% of \$0, and hence not paying toward their rent. Once they get income, then a minimum of 30% must go to rent.

Should HomeBASE rental assistance for the first month be prorated based on the date the HomeBASE application is approved, or should it be based on the beginning of tenancy established in the lease?

It should be based on the start date of the lease, not the approval date.

C. Fund Uses

In the past, families could only use HomeBASE once to leave the state. If a family has an opportunity to move out of state using HomeBASE again, can they use the funds?

We can review these on a case-by-case basis. The admin plan says 1x cap but also there is language that leaves it open to EOHLC discretion.

If a landlord is reluctant to rent to an applicant but will accept them if they can pay for a year of rent upfront, is that an allowable way to use HomeBASE funds?

No you cannot pay the entire year of rent in one upfront payment with HomeBASE. You can however pay first, last, security, and a lease-up bonus of up to one month's rent at the beginning of the lease.

We do encourage you to use all tools in the toolkit to rehouse a family. For instance, you could look at SRI funds or ED funds for flexible use, like a higher upfront payment. Reach out to the EOHLC Rehousing Team to see what makes sense for the family you are working with.

Can you pay all of a tenant's rent using the HomeBASE benefit?

The goal of HomeBASE is to maximize the program's benefit to stabilize the family for the full 24-36 month period and maintain ongoing stability upon program completion. This means empowering the family to become increasingly independent in paying their own rent.

Only in short term instances should HomeBASE be covering the full rent and even then the family's HomeBASE allocation plan should include when they will begin contributing to rent.

For instance, if a family has no income and needs HomeBASE to pay the first few months in full (for instance 3 months), the stabilization case manager should create the family's plan with full payment stipends for a few months and then show an increase in family contribution to rent. As part of this plan, the stabilization case manager should complete a referral to employment services, so that the family is on track to find employment and begin contributing to the rent.

ONLY WHEN a person does not end up securing a job, should you complete a reallocation funds in month 4 (when they would have begun contributing to rent) for a short term extension of full payment of rent. This should be an adjustment to the plan NOT the original plan. We want to avoid families having no HomeBASE funds left to work with after year 1.

D. 3RD Year of HomeBASE

How do we identify if a family is eligible for two or and who is for three years of HomeBASE?

Families who are in HomeBASE as of July 1, 2023 or later are eligible for changes on a case-by-case basis, provided they can demonstrate need. Anyone who has exited stabilization is NOT eligible for this new third year of funding.

How will stabilization happen in the 3rd year, will responsibility stay with the provider?

The case manager continues through the third year.

If someone is in housing but is not stable after 24 months, are we able to further assist them with the \$15K?

The \$15,000 will be issued on a case-by-case basis, based on the needs of the family.

E. Program Administration: Landlords + Leases

How can the process for approval be sped up so that the start of leases aren't missed? I.e., a family has received approval but has not yet received the approval letters or documentation.

RAAs can manually generate an approval letter. If they need help doing that, advise them to contact Joanne Camara or Molly Butman.

Can the RAA provide a promissory note to the landlord in advance?

We don't do promissory notes, but if there has been a delay in notification of approval, reach out to the RAA to let them know you need approval to submit to the landlord. If you don't know who to contact, please see the list uploaded to the HomeBASE resource portal: www.mass.gov/info-details/homebase-resource-portal.

Is it possible for landlords to receive first/last/security by paper check?

Yes, landlords can choose how they want to receive payment when they set up a profile. If they want more than one payment method, it is possible, but they may need to reach out to an RAA to arrange that.

F. Program Administration: Other

Should we request stipends for year 1 and then re-request once year 2 takes effect?

If you know what the family's needs are beyond year 1, you can submit a request for beyond the 12 months. Requests are based on family's needs and budget.

How can we find out who is processing out HomeBASE case?

Each RAA usually only has one staff member working on HomeBASE cases. Please see the list uploaded to the HomeBASE resource portal: www.mass.gov/info-details/homebase-resource-portal.

How long does it usually take to start an application and get to approval?

Once the RAA has all the information they need, the processing time should take around 5-7 days. The best way to assure quick processing is to submit a complete app and stay in communication with the landlord to have them do their part. It is the responsibility of the EA/Diversion staff to assist the landlord in their profile and application process.

Can current market rate families in stabilization use the enhanced diversion funds?

Enhanced diversion funds are for families who are working with diversion at the front door, not for families working on stabilization. If a family is working with stabilization, check with the RAA

to see what funding remains from HomeBASE to do a reallocation of funds, if needed.

2. HomeBASE + Vouchers and Public Housing

Where are we with issuance? We have families who we submitted information for, but landlords are still hesitant to move families in with just HomeBASE.

If there is a particular family who is ready to lease up minus their voucher issuance, reach out to Joanne.Camara@mass.gov and Natasha.Sierra@mass.gov to elevate.

We are running into families coming to the top of the list (for public housing) to only be rejected due to their immigration status. Do you have any suggestions?

For federal public housing, you need at least one family member with a legal status to receive subsidy. For state public housing and voucher programs, there is no legal status requirement.

Does immigration status factor in with an MRVP?

MRVP, AHVP, and state public housing do not have status requirements.

If a family is taking HomeBASE rental assistance, are they still remaining on the homelessness priority once they receive a housing interview? (public housing and vouchers)

This depends on the housing authority and the waitlist. For state housing, you maintain your homeless status if accepting HomeBASE. For federal funding, you do not maintain homeless status.

3. Broker Bonus

Do Diversion providers have access to the \$500 realtor bonus (through ED funds instead of SRI)?

It was built for exits, not diversion, so they do not have access to the realtor bonus.

Can a broker receive both their usual broker fee and the broker \$500 incentive?

Yes, their broker fee can be covered by HomeBASE, and the broker \$500 incentive would be covered by a separate funding pool.

4. Landlord Bonus

Is the landlord bonus out of the first \$30K?

Landlord Bonus (of one month rent) is an allowable expense from HomeBASE and that is out of the first \$30K of HomeBASE.

Realtor Bonus (\$500) is separate from HomeBASE, paid to the Real Estate Commission Program out of SRI (there is money set aside that is separate from the \$15M SRI and ED).

Can the landlord and broker bonuses be used for the same family?

Yes, both bonuses can be used for families.

5. SRI Funds

Can SRI funds be used for stabilizing families who are struggling to maintain permanent housing?

SRI funds are for families exiting shelter, but please reach out to the EOHLC team if you are struggling to support a family on stabilization, we can problem solve together.

Do we need to contact EOHLC before committing SRI funds for a family?

Please connect with your contract manager to confirm the use is specific to a shelter exit.

Are you going to give providers additional money for SRI and ED in their contracts or do we apply to HLC directly for each family?

Please connect with Amber Noyes and your Contract Manager; we can increase the SRI and ED budgets for your organization as needed.

How quickly will decisions be made about SRI funds if specific family needs are being assessed?

With SRI there is no formal decision, just connect with your Contract Manager to confirm that the use of the funds will support an exit (SRI). With ED funds for diversion, you need to submit an ED request to Livia DaSilva - livia.dasilva@mass.gov.