


MASSACHUSETTS
RENTAL VOUCHER
PROGRAM
(MRVP)

ADMINISTRATIVE
PLAN TRAINING

Module #1:

Part I: Introduction, MRVP Regulations & Governance

Part II: Eligibility, Issuance Briefing & Voucher



March 2023

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Welcome

- Welcome to the MRVP Administrative Plan training.
- Over the course of the next several months, we will conduct training sessions on commonly applied MRVP policies.
- Each session will cover a section/chapter or grouping of sections/chapters from the MRVP Administrative Plan.
- Each session and training module focuses on the application of MRVP program policies for specific program elements.

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Training Curriculum & Schedule

#	Topics	Admin Plan Chapter(s)	Month
1.	• Training Introduction, MRVP Regulations & Governance • Eligibility, Issuance Briefing & Voucher	Chapters 1, 4, 6	March 2023
2.	• Verification	Chapters 7-8	March 2023
3.	• Calculation of Voucher Payment & Tenant Rent Share	Chapter 7	April 2023
4.	• General Leasing Procedures & MRVP Lease Addendum	Chapters 9-10	April 2023
5.	• Voucher Payment Contract • Rent Reasonableness & Rent Increases	Chapters 11 & 12	May 2023
6.	• Relocation & Project Based Voucher Transfers	Chapters 12 & 14	May 2023
7.	• Redetermination of Tenant Rent Share	Chapter 16	June 2023
8.	• Terminations & Grievances	Chapter 17	June 2023
9.	• Program Administration & Program Integrity	Chapters 18-19	July 2023

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Training Format

- All training sessions will be conducted virtually via Zoom.
- You will receive separate invites for each training session and must respond to indicate whether you will attend each session.
- The training will include interactive polling and practice questions. *(Please make sure you have the most current version of Zoom in order to participate in the interactive elements of the training.)*
- Sessions may be recorded.

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Training Materials

- You will receive student versions of the training materials in advance of each session.
- It is recommended that you print out the materials in advance of the session, if able, so that you may follow along.
- Certain sessions may require use of a calculator. It is recommended that you have a calculator and writing utensil available during each session.

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Training Format

- If there are questions that cannot be answered during the training, DHCD will follow up to provide further clarification.
- We strongly encourage questions and participation. Please utilize the Question & Answer and chat functions of Zoom to indicate if you have a question or comment.
- We look forward to working with you during these training sessions!

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Training Objectives

- The purpose of the training is to ensure that program staff:
 - Gain knowledge about the background, history, and purpose of the program.
 - Administer all program elements efficiently and accurately.
 - Effectively utilize and navigate the MRVP Administrative Plan and related and related policy documents and forms.
 - Calculate tenant rent and voucher payments accurately.
 - Utilize training resources to train new staff and/or as a refresher for existing staff.

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Overview of the MRVP Program

PROGRAM OVERSIGHT STRUCTURE
HISTORY & BACKGROUND
APPLICABLE LAWS & REGULATION

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Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)

- The purpose of the MRVP program is to provide rental assistance to eligible low-income households.
- There are currently 8 regional non-profit housing agencies and 100 local housing authorities that administer MRVP throughout the Commonwealth.
- MRVP provides housing stability to over 9,400 low-income households (and growing!)
- In FY 2023, MRVP's total budget was over \$174 million dollars – the largest it has ever been!

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Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)

- DHCD administers a variety of programs, including public housing, emergency shelter, housing stabilization, rental assistance, affordable rental and home ownership development, community development, fuel assistance, and other community services.
- DHCD partners with hundreds of private and non-profit organizations throughout the state to achieve its goals.



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DHCD Division of Rental Assistance (DRA)

- Within DHCD, the Division of Rental Assistance (DRA) has the responsibility for regulatory and administrative oversight of all state-funded affordable housing rental assistance programs, including the administration of MRVP.
- In addition to state-funded rental assistance, the DRA is responsible for oversight and administration of over 22,000 federal rental assistance subsidies throughout the state.



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Administering Agencies (AAs)

- DHCD contracts with different agencies to administer MRVP on its behalf.
- These agencies are collectively referred to as Administering Agencies (AAs). AAs are made up of:
 - Local Housing Authorities (LHAs); and
 - Regional Administering Agencies (RAAs)



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Local Housing Authorities (LHAs)

- LHAs are independent authorities formed at the city or town level to provide public housing and rental assistance to low-income households.
- LHAs receive funds directly from the Commonwealth to support state rental assistance programs.
- Some LHAs also receive Federal funds to support Federal public housing and/or Housing Choice Voucher Program rental assistance.
- There are approximately 240 LHAs in Massachusetts.
- Approximately 100 LHAs administer some type of MRVP Voucher

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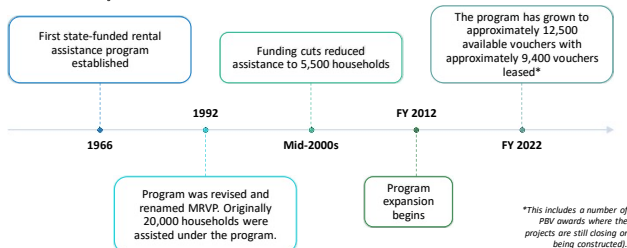
Regional Administering Agencies (RAAs)

- Regional Administering Agencies (RAAs) are eight private, non-profit agencies that administer rental assistance programs throughout the state.
- DHCD subcontracts the administration of its Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP or Section 8) Vouchers to these agencies.
- All eight RAAs also administer MRVP on behalf of DHCD.

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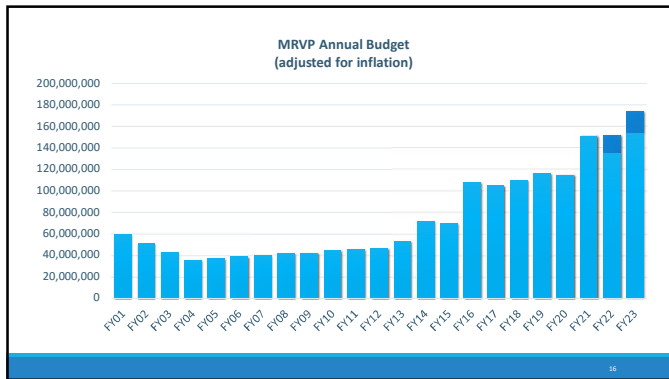
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History of MRVP



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Types of MRVP Vouchers

There are two types of vouchers authorized under MRVP:

Tenant-Based Vouchers (TBV):

- The voucher is issued to the Participant.
- The voucher is valid to be used anywhere in the state of Massachusetts, as long as the unit is approvable.

Project Based Vouchers (PBV):

- PBVs are assigned to a specific housing unit or development.
- A participant benefits from the subsidy as long as they continue to live in the PBV unit.
- When a participant moves, they generally cannot take the subsidy with them.

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Applicable Laws & Regulations

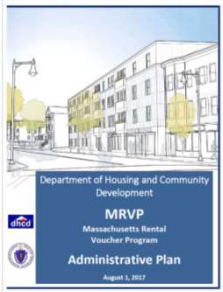
- DHCD's regulations governing MRVP can be found at 760 CMR 49.00
- Currently there is proposed legislation to write MRVP into state law.
- Program policy changes are generally made through revisions to the budget language.

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The Administrative Plan

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Purpose of the Administrative Plan



- The purpose of the Administrative Plan is to aid in the proper administration of MRVP by clarifying DHCD's policies for carrying out the program in a manner consistent with MRVP regulations.
- The Admin Plan is a living document that has the flexibility to change as MRVP changes.

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Purpose of the Administrative Plan

- Why is the Admin Plan so important?
 - Provides for effective operation of the MRVP Program
 - Provides staff with a tool for decision making
 - Ensures consistency in the operation of the MRVP program
 - Minimizes legal challenges
 - Promotes fairness, uniformity & equity

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Mandatory Requirements vs. Discretionary Practices

Mandatory program requirements:

- Required by legislation, regulations, current administrative guidance, notices, and DHCD legal opinions.
- Example: The voucher search period shall be 120 calendar days from the date of issuance.

Discretionary practices:

- Practices and procedures developed by the Administering Agency (AA) (i.e. the LHA or RAA who administers the voucher) which are not required under mandatory program requirements.
- In some cases, these practices and procedures may be based on optional, non-binding DHCD guidance, including notices that have expired, but not been suspended, and recommendations from individual DHCD staff.
- Example: The AA may grant one voucher extension request if cause exists. The AA must determine how they interpret cause.

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Updates to the Administrative Plan

- DHCD will revise the Administrative Plan periodically to comply with program, regulatory and legislative changes.
- The plan may also be updated to clarify information and ensure staff consistency in operation.
- AAs are notified of additions or changes to the plan and/or DHCD policies and procedures by email and program notice, which are publicly available on www.mass.gov/mrvp.

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Administrative Plan

- This training will cover commonly applied MRVP policies; however, will **not** include **all** MRVP Admin Plan policies.
- Staff remain responsible for review and correct application of all MRVP policies in accordance with the Administrative Plan and all related notices and guidance.

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Application & Selection from the Waiting List

WAITING LIST
SELECTION
PREFERENCES & PRIORITIES

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Waiting Lists

- Waiting lists for Mobile Vouchers are currently maintained by the AA. However, MRVP will be added into the CHAMP system in September 2023.
- Once in CHAMP, all MRVP waiting lists will be opened and will remain so.

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Waiting Lists

- Waiting lists for Project-Based Vouchers (PBVs) may be established by either the owner or AA via CHAMP
 - As of FY 13, all new PBVs have owner-managed waiting lists.
 - When an owner manages their own waiting list, the owner must submit, and DHCD must approve, the owner's Tenant Selection Plan (TSP).
- Older projects may switch to owner-managed waiting lists upon owner request and DHCD review and approval.

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Order & Selection from the Waiting List

- Order and selection from the waiting list is based on date and time of application, priority categories, and local or regional preference.
- This means that a homeless Applicant, for example, may be offered a voucher before a non-homeless Applicant.

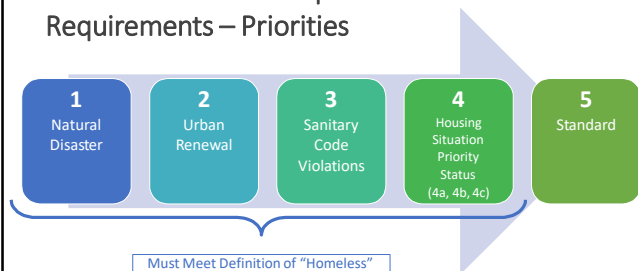
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Priority

- Priority: DHCD has contracted with Archipelago Strategy Group (ASG) to verify homeless priority for all applicants for MRVP, AHVP, and state-aided public housing.
- The following slide includes the priority categories which inform the order of selection
 - Priorities 1-4 focus on homeless applicants
 - Priority 5 is for any applicant who does not fit into categories 1-4

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MRVP Standard Participant Selection Requirements – Priorities



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Local Resident Preference (LHAs only)

- For LHAs only, a Local Resident preference shall be applied within each priority category when determining the order of tenant selection.
- For applicants who claim a local or regional preference but no homeless priority, the AA will be responsible for verifying local/regional preference.
- A Local Resident is defined as a person or Household who meets the following criteria at the time of application and final determination of eligibility:
 - Has a principal residence in the LHA's city or town
 - Is employed or has a verified offer of employment in the LHA's city or town
 - Has a child who attends school in the LHA's city or town

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Eligibility Screening

VITAL DOCUMENTS
INCOME ELIGIBILITY
ASSET ELIGIBILITY
CRIMINAL RECORD AND HOUSING HISTORY

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Eligibility Screening

- Once an applicant is selected from the waiting list, the AA must determine eligibility for assistance.
- The AA is responsible for ensuring that every Household admitted to MRVP is selected from the waiting list according to policy and meets all program eligibility requirements.
- The Household must provide any information needed by the AA to verify eligibility and determine the level of the Household's assistance.

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Eligibility Screening Components

Submission of vital documents:

- Government-issued photo ID
- Verification of date of birth
- Social Security number verification

Screening for:

- Income
- Assets
- Criminal activity
- History in subsidized housing

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Vital Documents

Where possible, all adult household members must provide each of the following:

- Government-issued photo ID;
- Verification of date of birth; and
- Social Security number verification

Household members who are not able to provide all documents must, at a minimum, provide at least one of the following:

- Government-issued photo ID;
- Birth certificate; or
- Social Security card.

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Photo ID

- The AA must obtain a government-issued photo ID for the Head of household and every other **adult** household member, unless a household member attests that they are unable to obtain a government-issued photo ID.
- A government-issued photo ID is a photo ID issued by the state or federal government or by a foreign government.
- A government-issued photo ID may be accepted even if it has expired.

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Photo ID

Examples of acceptable government-issued photo ID include:

- Driver's license (any state and/or country)
- State ID card (any state)
- Passport (United States or foreign)
- Permanent resident immigration card
- U.S. military ID
- Foreign national ID card
- Blind Access and Senior CharlieCards, Transportation Access Pass, and any other MBTA transportation ID card that is government-issued and includes a photo of the holder
- Massachusetts Commission for the Blind Blindness Identification Card.

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Photo ID

- If an adult household member attests that they cannot obtain a government-issued photo ID:
 - The AA shall accept whatever photo ID the household member can provide, even if not government-issued
 - The Participant must provide a birth certificate and/or Social Security card;
 - The Participant must complete a Government-Issued Photo ID Self-Attestation form; and
 - The Participant must provide the government-issued photo ID to the AA if/when they receive it.

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Government-Issued Photo ID
Self-Attestation Form

[illegible]

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Photo ID

- Acceptable reasons for being unable to obtain government-issued photo ID may include, but are not limited to:
 - Requested/applied for government-issued photo ID, but will not obtain in a timely manner
 - Applicant/Participant does not have documents required to obtain government-issued photo ID; and/or
 - Government-issued photo ID was lost, stolen, and/or destroyed and has not yet been replaced.

Note: This may primarily impact households who may have greater difficulty applying for and/or obtaining photo ID due to documentation and/or other requirements, such as undocumented immigrants and/or homeless individuals/households.

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Date of Birth

- For each household member, the AA must request verification of date of birth.
- Ideally, the AA shall attempt to obtain an original or copy of every household member's birth certificate.
 - A passport, immigration card, or other government-issued photo ID confirming date of birth is acceptable when a birth certificate is not available.
 - For young children, the AA may also accept a mother's letter provided by a hospital at the time of the child's birth in lieu of a birth certificate.

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Date of Birth

- If a household member cannot provide a birth certificate at initial screening, the AA shall accept any documentation that confirms the household member's date of birth (including photo ID).
- If a household member cannot provide a birth certificate or photo ID:
 - The household member must provide their Social Security card (if they have an SSN);
 - The household member must self-attest to their date of birth; and
 - The household member must provide their birth certificate to the AA if/when they receive it.

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Social Security Number (SSN)

- Each adult household member must authorize the use of their Social Security number, if they have one, to verify income for the purposes of determining eligibility, Tenant Rent Share, and Voucher Payment.
- The ideal verification of a Social Security number is someone's Social Security card, but other verification may be accepted, such as official correspondence from the Social Security Administration.
- If a household member does not have an SSN:
 - No verification of SSN is required; and
 - The household member must provide government-issued photo ID (if able) and/or birth certificate to verify identity.

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Vital Documents

- If a household member has any or all of three vital documents then they must provide them to the AA.
 - Ideally → government-issued photo ID, birth certificate, and SS card.
- If a household member is missing one or more of these documents but subsequently receives them during their participation in MRVP, they must be provided to the AA.
- **If an adult household member, including the Head of Household, cannot provide either a government-issued photo ID, birth certificate, or Social Security card then they are not eligible for MRVP.**

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Reminder!

- MRVP and other state programs do not have citizenship or immigration status requirements.
- Thus, AAs should not request verification of citizenship and/or immigration status for MRVP households, as it does not affect program eligibility.
- In cases where a household member does not have an SSN then SSN verification is not required.

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Authorization for Release of Information

- All Applicants and Participants age 18 or older must sign the Authorization for the Release of Information when being screened for program eligibility.
 - Note: the form must also be signed at recertification and relocation.
- The form must be used by all AAs and placed on AA letterhead.
- The form has been translated into multiple languages
- **Coming Soon! A new version of the Authorization for Release of Information form will be distributed to AAs by DHCD once finalized.**

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Authorization for Release of Information

- The Authorization for the Release of Information form:
 - Allows AAs to verify income, assets, and deductions with a third party; and
 - Allows AAs to share data with DHCD and DHCD to share that data with other government agencies if deemed necessary.

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Brain Teaser #1

- Which of the following is not considered to be a government-issued photo ID, for the purpose of verifying eligibility for MRVP?
 - a. Passport
 - b. U.S. military ID
 - c. Library card
 - d. Permanent resident immigration card
 - e. Blind Access CharlieCard photo ID

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Brain Teaser #2

- Which of the following is acceptable verification of Date of Birth for a minor child?
 - a. Birth Certificate
 - b. Passport
 - c. Mother's letter provided by a hospital at the time of the child's birth in lieu of a birth certificate.
 - d. All of the above

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Brain Teaser #3

- True or False? A government-issued photo ID may be accepted even if it is expired.

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Income Eligibility

- At initial eligibility, household's net income can be no more than 80% of Area Median Income (AMI)
- AMI is updated annually by HUD and varies by region and household size.
- Each AA must review and adhere to the income limits for their income limit area.

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Asset Eligibility

- Certain assets are excluded from consideration of program eligibility and/or calculation of income:
 - Automobile used as the primary source of transportation for the household
 - Money in an Individual Retirement Account, 401(k), pension, or similar retirement account subject to IRS regulation; and
 - The value of any interest in a special needs trust, as defined by state and federal law.

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Asset Value

- The market value of an asset is its worth in the market, e.g. the value of an investment account, market value of the equity in real property or the current savings account balance.
- When calculating assets, use the market value of the asset.

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Prior History & Criminal Background Screening

OVERVIEW
HISTORY IN SUBSIDIZED HOUSING
CRIMINAL BACKGROUND SCREENING
MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES
VERIFICATION
RECORD KEEPING

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History in Subsidized Housing

- To be eligible for MRVP the AA must verify that the household:
 - Does not owe rent, damages, vacancy loss payments, or any other monies to an Owner or AA during a participation in a subsidized housing program, for which they are not current on a repayment agreement.
 - Has not been terminated for cause from a previous subsidized housing program for cause within the three years prior to application, or terminated from such programs more than once.

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History in Subsidized Housing (cont.)

- To be eligible for MRVP the AA must verify that the household:
 - Has not had a prior Judgment for Possession from an AA or Owner under a subsidized housing program for good cause within the 3 years prior to application, or has had multiple judgments.
 - The Judgment does not have to be a physical eviction. Any Judgment for Possession has the potential for denial.

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History in Subsidized Housing (cont.)

- To be eligible for MRVP the AA must verify that the household:
 - Has not misrepresented or falsified any information required to be submitted as part of the Applicant's application, or a prior application within three (3) years. Misrepresentation must be intentional.
 - The three-year time limit only applies to misrepresentation or falsification made in connection with a prior application for any state benefit.
 - Includes, but not limited to, MRVP, AHVP, state-funded public housing, EA, HomeBASE, Rental Assistance to Families in Transition (RAFT), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

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History in Subsidized Housing (cont.)

- To be eligible for MRVP the AA must verify that the household:
 - Has not committed program abuse or fraud, defined as a “single act or patterns of actions that constitute a false statement, omission, or concealment of a substantial fact, made with the intent to deceive or mislead”
 - Applies only to MRVP fraud, not fraud in other housing programs
 - Unless fraud led to termination, which would be a “for cause” termination from subsidized housing

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History in Subsidized Housing (cont.)

- To be eligible for MRVP the AA must verify that the household:
 - Has not failed to comply with the terms of a previous MRVP Voucher
 - If a Household is terminated from MRVP for failure to comply with the MRVP Voucher, the Household shall be ineligible for MRVP for three years following the termination.
 - If a Household is terminated from MRVP more than once for failure to comply with the MRVP Voucher, the Household shall be ineligible for MRVP indefinitely.

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Criminal Activity

- Prior criminal activity is checked, regardless of whether an applicant previously lived in subsidized housing; however, the offenses below are the only offenses that AAs should consider when screening.
- Must not have engaged in criminal activity, which would interfere with or threaten the rights of other tenants or AA employees to be secure in their persons or in their property or with the rights of other tenants to peaceful enjoyment of their units and common areas.
- Consider only the following offenses when determining eligibility:
 - Drug related crimes in past 3 years prior to application;
 - Violent crimes in past 3 years, e.g. involve use of physical force likely to cause bodily injury or damage to property;
 - Egregious crimes, e.g. rape, manslaughter; and
 - Level 2 or 3 sex offenses.

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Illegal Drug Use

- Must not be a current illegal user of one or more controlled substance as defined by M.G.L. C. 94C 1, or have a Household member who is engaged in such activity
 - A person's illegal use of a controlled substance within the preceding 12 months shall create a presumption that such person is a current illegal user of a controlled substance. Presumption may be overcome by a convincing showing that the person has permanently ceased all illegal use of controlled substances.
 - This disqualification of current illegal users of controlled substances shall not apply to Applicants for housing provided through a treatment program for illegal users of controlled substances.
 - Illegal use of a controlled substance must be more likely than not based on reliable information. Allegations of illegal use of a controlled substance must be substantiated.
 - Marijuana is not considered to be a controlled substance.

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Production of Methamphetamine

- Ineligible determination if convicted for drug-related criminal activity for the manufacture of production of methamphetamine
- Mandatory Denial
- CORI conference is still required.

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Sex Offender Registrant

- Ineligible determination if subject to lifetime registration as a sex offender in Massachusetts
 - Depends on crime(s) committed, not classification level
- Where applicable, results in mandatory rejection.
- Further information can be found in Section 4.3.2 Mandatory Rejection in the Admin Plan.

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Additional Screening Factors

- Applicant must NOT have:
 - Directed abusive language or threatening behavior which was unreasonable and unwarranted toward an AA employee
 - Failed to provide information reasonably necessary for the AA to process the Applicant's application, including having all Household members ages 18 or older sign the Authorization for the Release of Information
 - Indicated that he/she/they intend to live somewhere other than the contract unit as their sole residence
 - Violated any other eligibility requirements set forth under MRVP or in DHCD administrative guidance

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Verification of Criminal Activity

- When determining eligibility for MRVP, AAs must review the Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) of each adult Household member.
 - CORIs are obtained from the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS).
- AAs must also review the Sexual Offender Registry Information (SORI) of each adult Household member.
 - This information shall be obtained from the Massachusetts Sex Offender Registry Board (SORB) at <http://www.mass.gov/sorb> and the United States Department of Justice National Sex Offender Public Registry at <http://www.nsopr.gov/>
- CORIs can be run without a Social Security Number. It is not a required field even though the information is requested. It can be left blank, or you can enter all zeroes.

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Verification of Criminal Activity

- Review the CORI and SORI of all Household members upon their 18th birthday once signed CORI release is obtained.
- Unless there is cause, do not review CORI and SORI of existing participants. Cause may include:
 - Report of a Household member's arrest;
 - Report of a Household member being imprisoned in a correctional facility; and
 - Credible report that a Household member has committed a crime.

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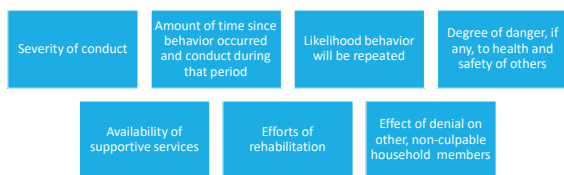
Mitigating Circumstances

- Prior to disqualifying an Applicant, permit the Applicant to show mitigating circumstances, which may include rehabilitation or rehabilitating efforts.
- Mitigating circumstances must be sufficient so that when the potentially disqualifying behavior is weighed against the mitigating circumstances, the AA is reasonably certain that the Applicant or Household member will not engage in any similar conduct in the future.
- The greater the degree of danger, the greater must be the strength of the mitigating circumstances showing that a recurrence of behavior will not occur in the future.
- Always consider reasonable accommodations and the impact of domestic violence.

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Mitigating Circumstances



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Record Keeping

- Only the staff members who require access to an Applicant's CORI may review it.
- CORI and SORI results shall not be kept in Applicant and/or Participant files.
- Note in the file the date that the CORI and SORI were reviewed, and whether the results were satisfactory, and if any further action was taken.
- The CORI and SORI must be appropriately destroyed.
- AAs are prohibited from providing verification to a property Owner or any other agency that an Applicant and/or Participant has no CORI/SORI or a "clean" CORI/SORI.
 - If questioned, an AA may state that all Participants have been found eligible for MRVP based on current eligibility criteria.
- Document the file with notes that the CORI and SORI were run on (enter date).

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Brain Teaser #4

- At initial eligibility, household's net income can be no more than _____?
 - a. 30% of AMI
 - b. 50% of AMI
 - c. 80% of AMI
 - d. 100% of AMI

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Brain Teaser #5

- Which of the following are not considered to be an asset for the purposes of determining eligibility for MRVP?
 - a. 401(k) account
 - b. Equity in ownership of a boat
 - c. Interest in a trust fund of a household member
 - d. All of the above are not considered assets under MRVP

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Brain Teaser #6

- True or False? CORI and SORI information must be kept in the participant file so that all staff may review it.

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Denial of Eligibility

OVERVIEW
NOTIFICATION
PRIVATE CONFERENCE

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Eligibility Determination

- Once screening is completed, eligibility determinations are made.
- Applicants who are denied must be notified and provided an opportunity for an informal conference, private conference and, as applicable, reconsideration.

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Written Notification

- Written notification of denial is required.
- This will be automated once MRVP is on the CHAMP system.
- The notice must include:
 - AA's determination including the relevant regulatory citation and plain language regarding the cause for denial.
 - Reason for the determination (including material facts)
 - Applicant right to optional informal conference prior to private conference
 - Applicant right to request a private conference, including right to be represented by applicant's counsel at applicant's expense

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Private Conference

- Must be requested within 14 days of mailing
- Request must be in writing and delivered by US mail, email or in-person
- Purpose of the conference:
 - Discuss with AA the reasons for denial
 - Permit consideration of pertinent information regarding case

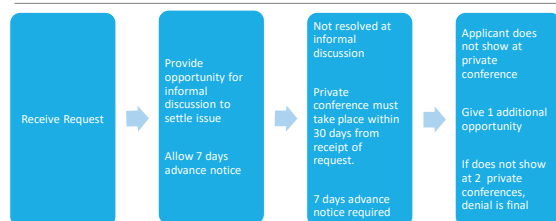
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Private Conference

- Private conferences (as well as pre-termination meetings and grievance hearings) shall be held remotely when possible.
- If the remote meeting becomes unfeasible or there appears to be confusion, the meeting shall be ended and postponed.
- After a failed attempt at a remote meeting, the AA shall have discretion to require an in-person meeting.
- Applicants/participants may also request an in-person meeting, and the AA shall honor their request, if feasible.

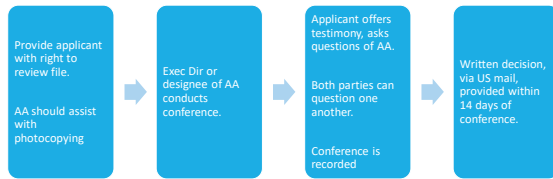
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Private Conference Process



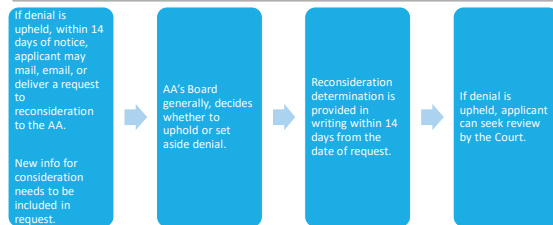
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Private Conference Process



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Private Conference Process



Note: Applicants cannot appeal this decision to DHCD!

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Private Conference

- Where feasible, AA holds the voucher or PB unit until the timeframe to request the private conference is exhausted.
- Not required to hold unit, if applicant requests review of determination after private conference.
- If denial is overturned, AA must offer the applicant the next Mobile or PB voucher for which they qualify.
- Applicant is placed back on the WL with original application date and time.

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Voucher Issuance & Briefing

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Purpose of the Briefing

- Once an applicant is deemed eligible, they must participate in a voucher issuance briefing ("briefing"). After participating in the briefing, they will receive their voucher.
- The applicant is required to participate in the briefing in order to learn about the MRVP program, including their role and responsibilities.
- The briefing is also an opportunity for the Administering Agency (AA) to explain the leasing process.
- The briefing will be conducted remotely, unless the applicant requests to participate in person or over the phone.

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Purpose of the Voucher

- The AA must prepare the voucher for the participant to sign once they have participated in the briefing, listing the names of all household members.
- The voucher is signed by both the applicant and AA and must be signed before leasing a unit. Once signed, the applicant will become a participant in the MRVP program.
- The participant and AA will be bound by the terms of the voucher. If the participant does not adhere to the terms, their voucher can be terminated.

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Voucher Type

- There are differences between the Mobile Voucher (Form 6.1) and Project Based Voucher (Form 6.2), so it is important that the appropriate one is used.
 - For **mobile vouchers**, the applicant is permitted to begin their search for a unit once the voucher has been issued to them.
 - For a **project-based voucher**, execution of the voucher indicates that the applicant has been determined eligible for the program and permits them to sign the lease for the specific project-based unit they have been selected for.

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Voucher Issuance Briefing: Notice

- The AA will send a written invite to the applicant to participate in a briefing once they have been deemed eligible and a voucher is available to issue to them. The invite can be sent by mail or email (if an email address is provided by the applicant).
- The AA must provide at least seven (7) days' written notice of the briefing.
- Prior to the date of the scheduled briefing, the applicant may request to reschedule their briefing.

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Voucher Issuance Briefing: Format

- The voucher issuance briefing will be conducted remotely by an AA staff member, using video conferencing services (such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams).
- If the applicant indicates that they do not have access to participate in the briefing online, the AA may provide the briefing over the phone or in-person.

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Voucher Issuance Briefing: Accommodations

- The AA will follow its policies outlined in Chapter 3 of the Admin Plan to ensure that the voucher issuance briefing is accessible for participants and complies with all applicable nondiscrimination laws.
- Accordingly, the AA may make a reasonable accommodation for an applicant.
- The AA will also take steps to communicate with applicants and participants with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) who need information to be provided in a language other than English.
- If indicated on their application, the AA will provide translation and/or interpretation services to the applicant.

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Voucher Issuance Briefing

- To prepare the applicant to participate in the MRVP program, the AA will provide detailed information on the program at the briefing.
- The briefing is an important opportunity to:
 - Explain the responsibilities that the applicant will assume once they become a participant in the MRVP program
 - Set expectations for the housing search process for applicants issued mobile vouchers
 - Describe the AA's role and responsibilities to the participant
- The AA will also explain in detail any form the applicant will be required to sign.

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Voucher Issuance Briefing: Required Documents

- | | |
|--|--|
| • The AA must provide the following documents to each applicant: | • The AA will also provide the following to applicants who receive a mobile voucher: |
| ◦ Voucher | ◦ Request for Program Payment |
| ◦ Fair Housing Fact Sheet | ◦ MRVP Mobile Voucher Payment Standards |
| ◦ VAWA Information | ◦ MRVP Utility Allowance chart |
| ◦ Tenant Obligations | ◦ Additional leasing documents (i.e. W-9, Direct Deposit form, etc.) |
| ◦ Lease Addendum | |
| ◦ Contact information for AA employees | |

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Voucher Issuance Briefing: Resources

- At the briefing, the AA will also use provide the applicant information on available resources to address barriers they may encounter during their housing search and to provide additional support for their family.
- Though the applicant may not need this support at the time of the briefing, they can refer to the information in the briefing and be encouraged to ask for help if needs arise later on.

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Voucher Issuance Briefing: Resources

- The AA should present information on:
 - Resources available to support the applicant's housing search, including from the Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCEC), Housing Navigator, MetroList, and other similar local resources
 - Fair Housing and applicant's rights under VAWA
 - Financial literacy programs offered by local agencies
 - Education and career programs
 - Family support including childcare and help obtaining special items for children like coats and school supplies

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Voucher Issuance Briefing: Attendance

- The head of household and all adult household member must participate in the briefing.
- The head of household cannot have someone, even a spouse, participate on their behalf.
- Adult members of the applicant household are required to participate but may be excused if they are in school or have a valid reason for not participating.

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Voucher Issuance Briefing: Failure to Attend

- If a household fails to participate in 2 scheduled briefings (without prior notice to the AA), the applicant will be found ineligible for the MRVP program and removed from the waiting list.
 - The AA may make exceptions in the case of emergency.
- The AA must send a notice to the applicant informing them that they have been found ineligible because they have failed to attend the briefing.
- The AA must follow all other denial procedures outlined in the Admin Plan.

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The Voucher

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Voucher: Participant Obligations

- By signing the voucher, the participant agrees to meet the obligations of the MRVP program which include:
 - Provide information and report changes within required timeframes
 - Provide information or documents requested by the AA
 - Request approval to add a household members (other than a birth, adoption, or court-ordered custody)
 - Sign any certification or release which the AA deems necessary for the administration of MRVP

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Voucher: Participant Obligations (cont.)

- By signing the voucher, the participant agrees to meet the obligations of the MRVP program which include:
 - Keep the contract unit in decent, safe, and sanitary condition
 - Not damage the unit beyond reasonable wear and tear
 - Notify the Owner when the unit is in need of repair or is no longer decent, safe, or sanitary
 - Notify the local Board of Health and AA if the Owner fails to respond to request for repairs

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Voucher: Participant Obligations (cont.)

- By signing the voucher, the participant agrees to meet the obligations of the MRVP program which include:
 - Comply with all lease terms
 - Pay the tenant rent share to the owner
 - Use the contract unit as the sole residence for the participant and household members, and permit only household members listed on the lease to reside in the contract unit
 - Grant the AA or DHCD access to the contract unit for inspections
 - Give the owner written notice 30 days prior to not renewing the lease at the lease renewal date

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Voucher: Participant Obligations (cont.)

- By signing the voucher, the participant agrees to meet the obligations of the MRVP program which include:
 - Request permission from the AA before terminating the lease for cause (i.e. safety violations, reasonable accommodations)
 - Subsequently give the Owner and AA written notice at least one full calendar month prior to terminating the Lease for cause. Notice is NOT required in cases of domestic violence.
 - Comply with all other lease and MRVP program requirements

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Voucher: Participant Obligations (cont.)

- Additionally, the participant must agree not to:
 - Threaten or engage in abusive behavior towards an AA employee
 - Own or have financial interest in the contract unit (including the spouse of the participant)
 - Be absent (with all other household members) from the contract unit for more than 30 days.
 - Allow guests for more than 30 days (consecutively or cumulatively)
 - Commit fraud or knowingly provide false information
 - Receive rental assistance or subsidy, such as Section 8, in addition to their MRVP assistance
 - Pay a rent amount other than that which is specified in the lease
 - Be convicted of violent or other criminal activity which interferes with others' health, safety, and security
 - Be evicted by the owner for cause or breach of the lease

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Voucher: Obligations of the AA

- As noted, the AA will also sign the voucher.
- By signing the voucher, the AA agrees to fulfill the following obligations:
 - Make monthly voucher payments to the owner on behalf of the participant
 - Withhold voucher payments to the owner if they fail to comply with the voucher payment contract
 - Terminate voucher payments to the owner when the participant vacates the contract unit, become ineligible or is terminated from the program
 - Terminate voucher payments to the owner if they fail to repair the contract unit in order to keep the unit's condition decent, safe, and sanitary; and in compliance with local code

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Mobile Voucher

- Participants who receive a mobile voucher must search for a housing unit and request that the AA approve the unit for leasing in the MRVP program.
- The voucher will inform the applicant of the standards which their chosen unit must meet in order for the AA to approve it.
- A mobile voucher will also inform the applicant that they can use their voucher in any municipality in the state.
- If the participant chooses to relocate out of the AA's jurisdiction, the voucher may be re-issued by the appropriate AA.

Form 800

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Housing and Community Development
Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program
Mobile Voucher

This voucher is issued by _____ (AA) to _____ (Participant) and the following members of the household: _____

Set off all members of the Participant's household who are not residing in the unit and _____

Date Issued: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Mobile Fee: _____

Once the Participant signs a Contract Unit and the administering Agency shall begin making voucher payments to the owner of the contract unit on behalf of the Participant. However, the date of expiration is no longer applicable, although the Participant and AA are still bound by all terms of the voucher.

The Tenant Rent Share is based on income.

1. Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program MOBILE VOUCHER

a. The Mobile Voucher has been issued by the AA to the Participant. The AA has determined that the Participant is eligible to participate in the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) upon the execution of a Voucher Payment Contract (VPC) between the Tenant and the AA. From the Voucher, the Participant receives a voucher, unit and contract unit with the AA may agree. The AA will then enter into a VPC with the Tenant, after which time the AA will make voucher payments to the Owner on behalf of the Participant for a Contract Unit.

b. The AA will determine the amount of the Voucher Payment pursuant to regulations and guidelines established by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The Participant must contribute at least 30% of net monthly income to the Gross Rent. Gross Rent is the Contract Rent plus any applicable utility allowances. To determine the Voucher Payment, subtract 50% of net monthly income from the total of the Gross Rent or the Tenant's Tenant Rent. To determine Tenant Rent Share, subtract the Voucher Payment from the Contract Rent. At no time can the Tenant Rent Share be less than 30% of the Participant's net income. However, Gross Rent. The Voucher Payment and Tenant Rent Share are subject to change.

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Mobile Voucher

- The AA must enter the following information on a mobile voucher:
 - Name of the AA
 - Name of the participant
 - Members of the household
 - Voucher size
 - Voucher Issuance Date
 - Voucher Expiration Date
- We will discuss the Voucher (or bedroom) Size, Voucher Issuance Date and Voucher Expiration Date in more detail in the later slides.

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Project-based Voucher

- If the participant receives a project-based voucher, they will not be required to search for a housing unit because the voucher is issued for a specific project-based unit.
- You will notice that the project-based vouchers include the contract unit address for the project-based unit that the participant will lease.

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Project-based Voucher

- The AA must enter the following information on a project-based voucher before issuing it to the applicant:
 - Name of the AA
 - Name of the participant
 - Members of the household
 - Contract Unit Address (for the project-based unit)
 - Date Issued
 - Bedroom Size

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Voucher: Unit Approval

- The AA will determine if the unit is decent, safe and sanitary based on the standards described in Chapter 9: General Leasing Procedures of the Admin Plan.
- The standards for the unit are the same for applicants who receive mobile and project-based vouchers.
- As described on the voucher, the AA has the sole discretion to deem a unit suitable or unsuitable for the MRVP program.
- The AA is not obligated to approve a unit chosen by the applicant.

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Voucher & Bedroom Size

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Voucher and Bedroom Size

- The AA will list the Voucher Size (mobile) or Bedroom Size (project-based) on the participant's voucher, which is the number of bedrooms that the AA has deemed appropriate for the family.
- Participants who receive a mobile voucher will be instructed to search for a unit with the same number of bedrooms as their voucher size.
- To determine the family's voucher size, the AA will review the family composition, including:
 - Age
 - Relationship
 - Gender

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Voucher Size

- The AA will use the following criteria to determine the appropriate number of bedrooms for the family:
 - Household members of the opposite sex will generally not be required to share a room unless they are in a partnered, romantic relationship or are 2 children under the age of 8.
 - Household members of the same sex share a bedroom except for a household member, aged 21 or over, who may elect not to share a bedroom with their child, grandchild or legal ward.
 - Unborn children will be counted when determining the voucher or bedroom size.
 - Each bedroom must be at least 70 sq. ft. and must contain at least 50 sq. feet of floor space for each occupant; and meet all other requirements of the State Sanitary Code.
 - No bedroom can be shared by more persons than permissible under the State Sanitary Code.

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Voucher Size: Exceptions

- If requested by the participant, the AA may increase the voucher size under the following circumstances:
 - If medical documentation is provided as evidence, the AA may permit a household member to have their own bedroom if sharing a bedroom would have a severe adverse impact on their mental or physical health.
 - As a reasonable accommodation for a disability, the AA may allow the household an additional bedroom.
 - An approved Personal Care Attendant receives their own bedroom. Only one bedroom may be granted for PCAs per Household.

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Over-housed

- Mobile Vouchers
 - If a family with a mobile voucher selects a unit larger than the voucher size, they will be considered over-housed. The AA will permit them to do so only if the unit is affordable based on their voucher size and applicable payment standard.
- Project-based Vouchers
 - A family with a project-based voucher cannot be over-housed at initial lease-up. However, they may become over-housed during their tenancy if a member of their family leaves.

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Underhoused

- An underhoused family is one that is living in a unit that is smaller than their voucher size.
- A family with a mobile or project-based voucher may choose to be underhoused at initial lease-up.
- However, the family may not later use being underhoused as a good cause to transfer or terminate the lease; unless the household composition has increased after leasing.

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Overcrowded

- Though families can be underhoused during tenancy, the AA will not permit them to be overcrowded, which is defined as a household that has too many people living in it based on square footage.
- Generally, the Board of Health will determine if the household is overcrowded.
- The AA may reject a participant's request to add a household member during their tenancy if it would result in the household being overcrowded.
- Though a participant is not required to request to add a member as a result of birth, adoption or court-ordered custody, the AA will work with the participant to re-locate to an appropriate-sized unit if the addition will result in overcrowding.

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Minimum Space Requirements

Number of Occupants	Minimum Required Total Square Feet of Unit	Minimum Required Total Square Feet of a Bedroom
1	150	70
2	250	
3	350	
4	450	
6	550	
7	650	
8	750	
9	850	
10	950	

Varies based on number of bedrooms and sleeping arrangements; see Chapter 9.2

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Brain Teaser #7

- Nick (HOH) and Sharon (spouse) have two children, Cassie (7) and Noah (2). What would the voucher size be for this family?

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Brain Teaser #8

	Family	Voucher Size
A	• HOH (age 73) and her adult sister (age 69)	
B	• HOH (age 85), his Personal Care Attendant, and the HOH's spouse (who has an approved accommodation for their own bedroom due to medical reasons)	
C	• HOH (age 29), and her 6-year-old daughter	

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Voucher Term

TERM, EXTENSIONS, AND SUSPENSIONS

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Mobile Voucher: Term

- As we discussed earlier, the participant can begin their housing search once they receive their mobile voucher.
- The participant will have **120 calendar days** to search for a housing unit from the Voucher Issuance Date to the Voucher Expiration Date listed on the voucher.
- The AA will track the days remaining on the voucher term, often referred to as the “voucher clock.”

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Mobile Voucher: Expiration

- The voucher will list the Voucher Expiration Date, the date when the participant must either:
 - Submit an RFPP or
 - Request an extension
- The voucher will expire if the participant does not submit an RFPP or request an extension before the Voucher Expiration Date.

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Mobile Voucher: Expiration Notices

- Thirty (30) days before the Voucher Expiration Date, the AA must send a notice to the participant with the following information:
 - Notice that the participants will no longer be entitled to MRVP benefits if they allow the voucher to expire
 - Instructions on how to request an extension
- The AA must also send a notice to inform the participant at the time that they have allowed their voucher to expire.
- Participants who allow their voucher to expire cannot request an appeal or file a grievance.

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Mobile Voucher: Clock Stop

- When the participant has found a unit they wish to lease, they will submit a Request for Program Payment (RFPP) and the AA will begin their process to determine if the chosen unit can be approved.
- Once the AA receives the RFPP, the voucher clock will stop.
- If the AA cannot approve the unit for which the participant has submitted an RFPP, the voucher will be amended to update the Voucher Expiration Date.
- The new Voucher Expiration Date is calculated from the date the unit found not suitable plus three days for mailing (if voucher is mailed).

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Mobile Voucher: Extension

- As noted in previous slides, the participant may request to extend their voucher term before their Voucher Expiration Date.
- The AA may provide a 30-day extension if the participant demonstrates cause, such as housing search logs to demonstrate that the participant is searching diligently but has been unable to find a unit.
- DHCD may grant an additional 30-day extension provided that the participant can provide documentation of hardship. The AA must submit such requests to DHCD (thomas.timms@mass.gov) on behalf of the participant.
- The participant will only be granted voucher extensions beyond 60 days for as part of a request for reasonable accommodation.

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Project-Based Voucher: Term

- The project-based voucher is only valid as long as:
 - The participant remains eligible;
 - The participant is the legal occupant of the contract unit, as referenced in the header of the voucher; and
 - There is a valid Voucher Payment Contract in place for the unit.
- Generally, the participant will sign a lease for a project-based unit at the time their voucher is issued to them.
- When the participant chooses to or is required to move from the project-based unit, the voucher will be automatically terminated, and the participant will not be entitled to any further MRVP benefits. However, the voucher will not be terminated if the participant is required and/or approved to move as a result of an administrative transfer.

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Voucher: Suspension

- For both mobile and project-based vouchers, the AA may suspend the voucher for **up to 1 year** if the entire household is unable to search for or occupy a contract unit.
- The head of household must submit a request for suspension and provide verification for the reasons they are requesting the suspension, including:
 - Hospitalization
 - In-patient treatment, including for substance abuse
 - An emergency that requires temporary relocation
- Vouchers cannot be suspended due to incarceration; however, the AA may suspend the voucher if the participant is arrested and unable to make bail.

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Voucher: Suspension

- Suspensions cannot be open-ended. The AA must suspend the voucher for a defined period of time according to the verified reason for their request.
- During the period of suspension, the AA will not make voucher payments to the owner on behalf of the participant.
- The AA cannot re-issue a suspended mobile voucher to another applicant. However, the AA may re-issue a suspended project-based voucher to another applicant based on the length of suspension and characteristics of the project.
- Before the voucher is re-issued to the participant, the AA must recertify the household's composition and income; however, the AA does not need to redetermine eligibility.
 - Household members added during suspension require approval
 - If the household is over-income at the time of reissuance, issue the voucher, then prepare and send an over-income termination letter.

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Mobile Voucher Suspension

- A Mobile Voucher may be suspended if:
 - The entire Household is unable to occupy the Contract Unit for more than 30 days (without prior AA approval); and
 - The Participant is unable to look for housing for a set time period.
- A suspended Mobile Voucher may not be reissued to an Applicant.
- The AA may also provide a voucher suspension to a participant currently leased. In such cases, tenancy must first be terminated by an Owner or Participant and the Participant must have a Mobile Voucher issued to them before the Mobile Voucher may be suspended. If the Participant does not vacate the Contract Unit prior to Voucher suspension, the Participant may be liable for the entire Contract Rent.

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Questions?

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Key Takeaways

- MRVP is a housing program that provide mobile and project-based vouchers
- Currently there are approximately 9,400 MRVP vouchers
- DHCD's regulations governing MRVP can be found at 760 CMR 49.00
- The Administrative Plan clarifies policies for carrying out the program in a manner consistent with MRVP regulations

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Key Takeaways

- Eligibility is based upon:
 - Providing required documents
 - Signing release forms
 - Income eligibility
 - Asset eligibility
 - Satisfactory history in subsidized housing
 - Passing a criminal background check
- If an applicant is denied they will be provided an opportunity for an informal conference, private conference, and/or reconsideration.

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Key Takeaways

- Applicants are required to attend a voucher briefing prior to receiving assistance.
- A voucher will be terminated if the participant fails to meet the obligations they agree to when they sign the voucher, such as reporting changes to the AA and keeping their unit in safe, sanitary and decent condition.

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Key Takeaways

- Applicants issued a mobile voucher must find a unit and submit an RFPP within 120 days, plus any approved extensions.
- Applicants issued a project-based voucher will sign a lease for a specific project-based unit.

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Upcoming Sessions

#	Topics	Admin Plan Chapter(s)	Date
✓ 1.	• Training Introduction, MRVP Regulations & Governance • Eligibility, Issuance Briefing & Voucher	Chapters 1, 4, 6	March 2023
➔ 2.	• Verification	Chapters 7-8	March 2023
3.	• Calculation of Voucher Payment & Tenant Rent Share	Chapter 7	April 2023
4.	• General Leasing Procedures & MRVP Lease Addendum	Chapters 9-10	April 2023
5.	• Voucher Payment Contract • Rent Reasonableness & Rent Increases	Chapters 11 & 12	May 2023
6.	• Relocation & Project Based Voucher Transfers	Chapters 12 & 14	May 2023
7.	• Redetermination of Tenant Rent Share	Chapter 16	June 2023
8.	• Terminations & Grievances	Chapter 17	June 2023
9.	• Program Administration & Program Integrity	Chapters 18-19	July 2023

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