

#### 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.
- All trainings are now available at EOHLC's MRVP training website:

 $\frac{https://www.mass.gov/info-details/training-resources-for-state-rental-assistance-program-providers}{}$ 

Training Module

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#### Training Curriculum & Schedule Training Introduction, MRVP Regulations & Governance Eligibility, Issuance Briefing & Voucher Chapters 1, 4, 6 $\checkmark$ Chapters 7-8 $\checkmark$ 3. • Calculation of Voucher Payment & Tenant Rent Share Chapter 7 April 2023 4. • General Leasing Procedures & MRVP Lease Addendum Chapters 9-10 April 2023 Voucher Payment Contract Rent Reasonableness & Rent Increases Chapters 11 & 12 May 2023 6. • Relocation & Project Based Voucher Transfers Chapters 12 & 14 June 2023 7. • Redetermination of Tenant Rent Share June 2023 Chapter 16 8. • Terminations & Grievances Chapter 17 July 2023 9. • Program Administration & Program Integrity Chapters 18-19 July 2023

#### Today's Session

- Today's session will cover the following areas:
- Error vs. Fraud
- Repayment Agreements
- Termination Notice Policies
- Mandatory vs. Voluntary Terminations
- Over-Income Policies
- Termination under VAWA
- Grievance Procedures

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#### **Resource Materials**

- Use EOHLC's MRVP Administrative Plan to ensure consistent application of policies and procedures.
- The policies we are reviewing today are found in Chapter 17 of the Administrative Plan
- The goal is to know where to find the information you need and to correctly apply policies.



Training Module 4

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#### Overview

- If a household fails to meet the obligations of an MRVP participant, the household shall be subject to termination from MRVP or other consequences, as described in this training module.
- AAs shall seek alternatives to termination whenever appropriate based on the participant's situation, but there are circumstances when termination of assistance is necessary.
- AA shall develop and fairly and reasonably apply rules as to when households are terminated and when alternatives may be offered.

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# Overview • A termination from MRVP automatically terminates the voucher and voucher payment contract on the effective date of program termination. • The participant may continue to live in the contract unit, but may be responsible for the entire contract rent, and if the participant fails to pay that rent, the owner may evict for nonpayment. • Once MRVP assistance is terminated, the AA is no longer involved in any form in the relationship between the participant and owner. 7 Error versus Fraud 8

#### Error vs. Fraud

- The main difference between error and fraud is **intent**.
- An error is unintentional.
- $\circ$  Fraud is a deliberate act to gain an advantage. It is hard to determine intent.

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- A common guideline is that a household's one-time failure to report information may be viewed as error, particularly if the household provides any requested information or explanations promptly when asked.
- In these cases, the household shall be given the benefit of the doubt and the AA may assume that it was an **error**.

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#### Error

- In cases of error, a household shall not be terminated simply for failure to report information, unless the information when received indicated that termination is otherwise required.
- For example, if the newly discovered income results in the tenant being over income and ineligible for MRVP, termination is required.
- If necessary and appropriate, the household shall be offered a repayment agreement.

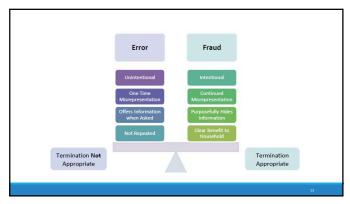
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#### Fraud

- If a household repeatedly fails to report information over the course of long periods of time, on numerous forms, or does not reveal the information when questioned, the AA may assume the household is acting deliberately and purposefully withholding information, which is fraud.
- In cases of fraud, even if minor, termination is appropriate.

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Repayment Agreements

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#### Repayment Agreements

- When a participant has failed to report accurately or timely (i.e., late recertifications) their family composition and income information or falsely verifies said information resulting in the AA overpaying a subsidy on their behalf, the participant must repay these amounts to the AA.
- The participant is obligated to repay the amounts owed as a condition of continued participation in the program.
- In these cases, depending on the circumstances and amount owed, the AA may offer a repayment agreement to the participant.

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#### Repayment Agreements

• To determine the amount owed, the voucher payment will be adjusted retroactively to the date such a change would have taken effect had the change of net income or household composition been properly reported, and the participant shall pay the AA the difference.

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#### Repayment Agreements

- The participant may pay the balance of the amount owed in a lump sum or may enter into a repayment agreement for payment over time.
- The frequency of payments required and payment amounts of a repayment agreement must be reasonable based on the household's income.
- The length of repayment agreements must also be reasonable. All repayment agreements must be calculated in a reasonable and equitable manner.

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#### Repayment Agreements

- The monthly amount due under a repayment agreement may NOT be more than:
- 10% of the household's monthly net income, and/or
- $^{\circ}$  Five years (60 months) long (unless approved by ED or designee).
- It is recommended that repayment agreements are calculated so the household pays less of their income over a longer period of time.
- Participants may make additional payments, outside of the prescribed monthly amount, at any time.

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#### Repayment Agreements

- If the participant cannot repay the total amount owed under those conditions, the repayment agreement may be extended to seven years (84 months) with the approval of the executive director of the AA or their designee.
- If the household cannot pay the total amount owed when paying no more than 10% of their net income over seven years, termination may be appropriate.
- Consult EOHLC for further guidance.

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#### Repayment Agreements

- If the participant's net household income decreases, they may request to have their repayment agreement recalculated to lower their monthly payment and extend the length of the agreement, if necessary.
- Note that recalculated repayment agreements may be more than seven years long.
- AAs shall not require payment when a participant's net household income is \$0.

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#### Repayment Agreements

- All repayment agreements are interest free, and no additional fees, such as late fees or processing fees, shall be charged.
- However, AAs may still charge the amount charged to them by a financial institutional for a check returned for insufficient funds.
- The household must consent to all terms of the repayment agreement in writing as a condition of continued program participation.

Training Module A

#### Repayment Agreements

- A participant may not enter into more than one repayment agreement at any time. If another repayment agreement is required while the first repayment agreement remains in effect, the household shall be terminated.
- Participants shall never be required to enter into repayment agreements for additional subsidies paid on their behalf due to agency error.

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#### Repayment Agreements

- Participants may be issued a voucher for relocation while under a repayment agreement if they are not behind on their payments.
- The participant may also transfer to another AA, if necessary.
- Upon leasing, the participant must enter into a repayment agreement with the receiving AA for the balance owed or be terminated from MRVP.

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#### Repayment Agreements

- If a participant does not agree that excess voucher payments were made on their behalf and refuses to either pay the balance owed or enter into a repayment agreement, the AA shall give the participant time to submit documentation to verify the participant's claims.
- If the participant cannot submit satisfactory documentation and still refuses to either pay the balance owed or sign a repayment agreement, the participant shall be terminated from MRVP.

Training Module

# Example #1 Situation Error or Fraud? Appropriate Action? 1. Sandy is receiving child support as of her last recertification. She begins to receive unemployment but fails to report this to the AA, as required. This Sandy's first time not reporting income and she provides all requested info promptly. 2. The Miller family consists of Susan (the HOH) and her two minor children, ages 2 and 4. The AA reviews Susan's tax return and discovers that she has been filing jointly with her husband, and that he lives with her and has been living with her for the past 6 years. He was never reported during recertification and his income, had it been reported, would have made the family over income for the program.

Example #1			
	Situation	Error or Fraud?	Appropriate Action?
1.	Sandy is receiving child support as of her last recertification. She begins to receive unemployment but fails to report this to the AA, as required. This is Sandy's first time not reporting income and she provides all requested info promptly.	Error	
2.	The Miller family consists of Susan (the HOH) and her two minor children, ages 2 and 4. The AA reviews Susan's tax return and discovers that she has been filing jointly with her husband, and that he lives with her and has been living with her for the past 6 years. He was never reported during recertification and his income, had it been reported, would have made the family over income for the program.		
	Training Module #8		26

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Example #1			
	Situation	Error or Fraud?	Appropriate Action?
3.	The Garcia family lists income from two separate jobs on their recertification questionnaire, but only provides pay stubs for one of them. The AA does not follow up to request additional pay stubs and uses income from only one of the jobs to calculate annual income and rent. The AA discovers this at the household's next recertification the following year.		
4.	A household fails to report income from their side business in which they receive payments "under the table." They state that they didn't know that they needed to report this income. The AA reviews the file and discovers that this is the third time over the course of the household's program participation that they failed to report this income.		

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**Termination Notice Policies** 

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#### **Termination Notice Policies**

- Because termination can have a lasting effect on an entire household, the AA should make every effort to reach out to the participant in various ways prior to termination.
- If it is known to the AA that the head of household is an LEP person, translation or oral interpretation of written notices regarding termination, including warning letters and pre-termination meeting and termination notices, may be required.
- All notices must be sent in accordance with any reasonable accommodations on file.

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#### Warning Letter

- For many types of terminations, as will be outlined later, one or two warning letters are required. Minimum requirements for warning letters are:
- $\,^{\circ}$  A plain language description of the situation that may lead to termination;
- A statement that if the behavior is not corrected, the household will be terminated from MRVP; and
- Information on how to request a reasonable accommodation.

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#### **Pre-Termination Meeting**

- For most terminations, the AA is required to attempt to meet with the head of household, virtually or in person, prior to termination:
- The head of household must receive at least seven calendar days' written notice prior to the meeting.
- If the head of household fails to appear at the meeting without prior notice, except in case of an emergency, they shall be given one more opportunity to attend a meeting.
- If the head of household fails to attend two meetings as scheduled, AA may proceed with termination.

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#### **Pre-Termination Meeting**

- For most terminations, the AA is required to attempt to meet with the head of household, virtually or in person, prior to termination:
- The AA must give the head of household a reasonable amount of time following the meeting to provide any information promised in the meeting or to take any necessary steps as promised in the meeting.
- If the head of household does not speak or understand English or is an LEP person, the AA shall provide translation services.

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#### **Termination Notice**

- The head of household must be notified in writing of the termination.
- In cases of death, termination notices shall be addressed to "The Estate of [Head of Household Name]"
- When the participant has vacated the unit, reasonable attempts shall be made
- contract unit and the new address, if

to locate them. Termination notices shall be sent to the known.



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#### **Termination Notice**



- Notification of termination must be sent by regular mail AND by certified or registered mail with receipt requested or some other method of delivery (hand delivery, overnight mail, etc.) that provides a way of documenting that the head of household received the termination notice.
- Proof of receipt of the termination notice, if received, shall be kept in the participant's file.
- Proof that the delivery service attempted and failed to deliver the notice (such as a returned certified mail envelope) shall also be kept in the participant's file.

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#### **Termination Notice**

- Owners must be notified of termination, but for privacy reasons the AA must not provide owners with the reason for termination.
- For LEP persons, the AA shall follow guidelines in Chapter 3.3 of the MRVP Administrative plan and their own Language Access Plan.
- Termination notices must be sent in accordance with any reasonable accommodations on file.
- Termination notices must explain how the head of household can request a reasonable accommodation.

#### **Termination Notice**

- Termination notices to participants must include the reason for termination. The reason for termination:
- Must be written in plain language and
- The language from the regulation and voucher, with a full citation, must be included, if applicable.

request and is able to receive the Voluntary over-income, with a reminder 45 days prior to Tennication in writing any lare before the termination date. Cannot file givenues on Effective Date of Evernication. Internity of the Voluntary of the Tennication of the Cannot first there.	citation may abe be added to the termination letter. 766 CMR 49.00/218): To be otherwise eligible b	d far a specific reason for termination, the following regulation or the MNVP, an applicant or participant including all It to comply with the terms of the MNXP voucher.
Material   Part   Material   Ma	Note: Unless otherwise noted, Voucher chations are identical	for both Mobile and Project Based Vouchers.
□ Parkensensis belandig □ Parkensensis belandig □ Salas 1 for File Salas 1 for File Salas □ Salas 1 for File Salas	Voluntary Termination	Over-Income
Section   Sect	S. Warning Letter(s)	O Warning Letterh
State of the Control	☐ Pre-termination Meeting	
Targetion Control Note: Sector	☐ Able to file Orievance	Able to File Grievance
Veraller Casilier   New York of the purpose and serve aligned in contrast units of the purpose and serve aligned in contrast units of the purpose and the purp	20 days Notice	6-months; 45 days Notice
Notes: Read of Household Initiates through written request and is able to reached the Voluntary Tennisation in voting any time before the Effective Date of termination is to office and the private section termination, takes, cannot the givenance or through the date of termination to the control of the private for the priv	Regulation Citations None	A persignent final service legisle for ecolomore and ox- ments after the risk date on wints booth offer. The final service are not service as the final service and the final service are not a service and the service and the 4-3-30, except the them-applicable soone (limit and ). The service's share of the next order to deliver and order to the service of the servic
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	request and is able to rescind the Voluntary Tennination in writing any time before the	over-income, with a reminder 45 days prior to termination date. Cannot file grievance on

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#### **Termination Notice**

- · Termination notices must list next steps, including:
- How to file a grievance;
- The time frame for filing a grievance (at least 14 calendar days is required);
- If the participant files a grievance, they will be given an opportunity to have an informal settlement conference;
- The participant has a right to examine documents related to the termination and how to make that request; and
- Who to contact at the AA with questions (direct contact info).
- It is recommended that a self-addressed stamped envelope for the AA is included in termination notices to make it easier for the head of household to file a grievance and/or request a reasonable accommodation.

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#### Reinstatement Notice

- If the household is reinstated into MRVP during the termination process, the head of household and owner shall be notified in writing.
- Notification of reinstatement must be sent by regular mail and with receipt requested or some other way of verifying that the Household received the reinstatement notice.
- Owners must be notified of reinstatement but must not be notified of reason for termination.

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	Voluntary Termination	
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	Voluntary Termination	
	<ul> <li>A household may voluntarily terminate its participation in MRVP at any time for any reason.</li> </ul>	
	<ul> <li>Requests to terminate program participation must be made in writing by the head of household.</li> </ul>	
	<ul> <li>Once the request is received by the AA, a termination letter is sent to both the owner and head of household, giving the head of household at least 30 days' notice of termination of MRVP</li> </ul>	
	household at least 30 days' notice of termination of MRVP participation.	
	The head of household may rescind the voluntary termination, by making such request in writing, at any point before program	
	participation is terminated.	
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	Over Income	

#### Over Income

- A household shall remain income eligible for MRVP until 6 months after the first date at which both of the following conditions are met:
- 1. The household's net income is more than 80% Area Median Income (AMI) for the locality in which the household lives; **and**
- 2. The tenant rent share is equal to the contract rent and/or no subsidy is being paid on the family's behalf.
- The household shall be terminated effective six months after the first date both conditions above are met.

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#### Over Income

- During the 6-month period, the household is still a full participant in MRVP, and the voucher may be re-issued for relocation.
- If at any point during the 6-month period, one of the conditions ceases to be met, the household shall no longer be terminated and be automatically reinstated into MRVP.

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#### Over Income

- The AA shall give the owner and participant written notice that the voucher will be terminated in 6 months. The notice shall include the date on which the termination will become effective.
- The AA shall again give the owner and participant written notice approximately 45-60 days prior to the termination effective date.
- If the participant is reinstated, notice of the six-month period must be given each time the household becomes over income.

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#### Over Income

- Participants cannot file grievances for over-income terminations.
- The participant may, however, file a rent share grievance at the time the tenant rent share is calculated, if they believe their tenant rent share was calculated incorrectly.

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### **Mandatory Terminations**

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#### **Mandatory Terminations**

- An alternative to termination shall be sought by the AA, if possible.
- For some causes, such as death of the sole household member, there are no possibilities other than termination.
- The Termination Guide in the MRVP Administrative Plan provides a helpful guide for reasons for termination, regulation citations, and possible pretermination procedures, notice required, and allowable grievances.

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da	Unless already notes, if there is a Yousher citation listed for a specific reason for termination, the Sidewing regulation citation may also be added to the termination letter.  "Sec CMM explicitle (1) in a SIMPLE CONTROLL OF SIMPLE CONTROLL				
Mother Uni	less otherwise noted, Vaucher chaffons are identical?	for both Mal	ibile and Project Based Vouchers.		
Region for T			e for Developing		
	y Termination		r-income		
	Warning Letter(1)	0	D. Warning Letter(s)		
	termination Meeting		Pre-termination Meeting		
	mination Notice	00	Termination Notice		
	e to File Grievance		Able to File Grievance		
30 days	Matter	Armenthy, 43 days. Nation			
Regulation	Citation: None	Pagai	Mation Citation: 796-CMR 48.09(2)(b)  3 participant direct receive religible for an observe settlicitio.  3 participant direct receive religible for an observe settlicition.  Michaeling included uses mice.  1. The participant's net mice.  1. The participant's net mice.  1. The participant's net mice.  2. The bound's little with published income Losini, and  2. The bound's little of the participant include in equal 15, or greater  2016. Che Control feet.		
Vewsher C	hation: None	Vend	ther Citation: None		
Soles	Read of Household initiates through written request and is oble to record the Voluntary Termination in writing any time before the Effective Date of termination.	Notes	Send initial invariantian letter rubers first to over income, with a reminder 40 days prior invariantian, but rusy file Treaset Farst Shar Germana within 31 days of determination.		

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#### **Mandatory Terminations**

- The AA shall also carefully consider all mitigating circumstances when determining whether termination is the appropriate action.
- Requests for reasonable accommodations and instances of domestic violence must also be considered. All situations shall be handled in a fair and consistent manor.
- If no alternative to termination can be found, it is required in the circumstances noted on the following slides.

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#### Failure to Comply with Repayment Agreement

- If a household fails to comply with all terms of a repayment agreement with an AA, including repeated late or partial payments without prior AA approval, they may be terminated from MRVP.
- Send out at least two written notices that the household is behind on their repayment (or have underpaid) and that continued inaction on their part shall result in termination.
- If the written warning letters are not sufficient, schedule a pre-termination meeting with the head of household and offer the household the opportunity to become current on the repayment agreement.

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#### Failure to Comply with Repayment Agreement

- If the household does not become current on the repayment agreement, terminate the household's MRVP participation.
- **30 days'** notice is required before this termination becomes effective.
- If the household becomes current on the repayment agreement any time prior to when program termination is effective, reinstate the household.
- While the household may file a grievance, they may only contest whether they are in compliance with the repayment agreement, not the existence of the repayment agreement itself.

Training Module #8

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<ul> <li>If a household is evicted from the contract unit for cause, the household must be terminated from MRVP.</li> </ul>		
Eviction for cause is a judgment for possession of the leased premises for the owner, entered against the household by a court for good cause. Good cause includes:     Failure to pay rent,     Damage to the property,     Disturbing the quiet enjoyment of neighbors, or	Eviction for Cause	
Otherwise violating the lease terms.		
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<ul> <li>The household may sign an Agreement for Possession of the leased premises with the owner, instead of having a court issue Judgment for Possession.</li> <li>An Agreement for Possession means that the household agrees to vacate the contract unit by a certain date and if they do not, the owner may ask the court for an eviction order.</li> <li>Sometimes agreements for possession will list lease violations, such as failure to pay rent. As part of signing the agreement, the household is admitting to the lease violations.</li> </ul>	Eviction for Cause	
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Households may be terminated based on the content of an Agreement for Possession, but exercise extreme caution and consider any mitigating circumstances.  Many tenants do not have adequate legal representation or advice when they go to court, whereas many owners do. Courts may also push owners and tenants to work together and sign an agreement, rather than have a judge issue an order.	Eviction for Cause	
<ul> <li>An eviction can also have lasting, detrimental effects on a household, such as losing their housing subsidy, so tenants may sign an agreement for possession because they do not want to risk getting evicted, even if they are not at fault.</li> </ul>	6	
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- For terminations for evictions for cause, schedule a pre-termination meeting with the household to discuss the eviction for cause and to review any possible mitigating circumstances, such as:
- Temporary loss of income or increase in expenses for which the tenant rent share could not be adjusted:
- If damage to the unit or disturbance was caused by a household member that is no longer part of the household;
- · Provisions under VAWA.
- Absent a compelling reason for why the household is not at fault for the eviction, the household must be terminated from MRVP.

Eviction fo

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#### Falsified Application

- If the household misrepresented or falsified information required to be submitted as part of the household's MRVP application or application process, or a prior application within three years, and the household fails to establish that the falsification or misrepresentation was unintentional, terminate the household's MRVP participation.
- Schedule a pre-termination meeting to discuss the falsification and allow the household to present information that the misrepresentation was unintentional.
- Give the household the benefit of the doubt, meaning if it is more likely than not that the falsification was unintentional, do not pursue the termination.

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- If the household or any of the members of the household have engaged in criminal activity which interfered with or threatened the rights of other tenants, AA employees, or owners, terminate the household's MRVP participation.
- Schedule a pre-termination meeting with the head of household and the household member who engaged in criminal activity to discuss the incident(s).
- The AA must determine it is more likely than not that the crime was committed by the household member, regardless of conviction. AA's may consider police reports.
- Consider all mitigating circumstances and adhere to the VAWA requirements.

Criminal Activity

- If the household member who committed the crime is not the head of household and is removed from the household, termination of the remainder of the household is not necessary.
- When deciding on termination, consider the severity of the action, past incidents, and likelihood to cause physical harm to others, as well as all other mitigating circumstances.
- Note that if the criminal activity results in a household member, who is not the head of household, being classified as a sex offender subject to lifetime registration in Massachusetts, the household member must be removed from the household, or the household must be terminated from MRVP.

#### Failure to Comply with MRVP Voucher

• If a household fails to comply with the terms of the MRVP voucher, the household shall be subject to termination.

- Failing to comply with the voucher may include:
- Violating the lease and/or MRVP Lease Addendum;
- Improperly terminating the lease;
- Subletting, assigning, or transferring the contract unit;
- Receiving duplicative assistance;
- Having a financial interest in the unit.

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#### Failure to Comply with MRVP Voucher

- A household that is terminated for failing to comply with the MRVP voucher will be ineligible for MRVP for a period of three years following their termination.
- Following a second termination from MRVP for failing to comply with the MRVP voucher, the household will be ineligible for MRVP indefinitely.
- A household that is a current participant in MRVP can be terminated from MRVP for failure to comply with the MRVP voucher, even if that failure was in the past.
- If the past failure to comply was not known at the initial determination of eligibility, but is discovered later, the household will likely also be terminated for falsifying their application or not reporting past terminations.

Failure to Comply with MRVP Voucher	Schedule a pre-terminati household to discuss the If the household continuous compliance with the MRV terminate the household participation.  If the household returns the MRVP voucher any tiprogram termination is e termination proceedings.  However, in cases of frau appropriate, even if the Loompliant with the MRVI.	situation. es to fail to be in /P voucher, 's MRVP  to compliance with me prior to when ffective, all may be dropped. d, termination is iousehold becomes		
67				
and unwarranted tow during the application application process w through the regular a the household is subj • Physical violence of a	ted abusive or which was unreasonable rard an AA employee n process, any prior rithin three (3) years, or dministration of MRVP, ect to termination.  In which from a household in AA employee will not	Abuse towards AA		
68				
involve physical violen termination meeting v and the household me abusive behavior to di  The meeting can be safe to do so) or virt  Consider all mitigating  If the household mem abuse is not the head removed from the hou necessary.  When deciding on tern behavior, severity of ti	with the head of household ember who engaged in iscuss the incident(s). in-person (if the AA feels it is ual g circumstances. where who committed the of household and is usehold, termination is not mination, consider past	Abuse towards AA		

#### • If a household fails to provide information reasonably necessary for the AA to process the family's application or conduct a recertification or reexamination, the household is subject to termination. Failure to A household's failure to recertify, by either Provide not attending recertification meetings with Information the AA or failing to return recertification information mailed to them, is included under failure to provide information. The AA must be able to show every effort was made, up to and including termination, to complete the recertification. 70 Request the information twice in writing through warning letters, noting that failure to provide information may result in termination. If the information is not provided after warning letters, schedule a pre-termination meeting with Failure to the household to discuss the information Provide required, reasons why the information was not provided, and possible termination. Information If the information is not provided, terminate the household's MRVP participation. If the information is provided to the satisfaction of the AA at any time prior to when program termination is effective, drop all termination proceedings. 71 • If the household intends to or lives somewhere other than the contract unit as their sole residence, terminate the household's MRVP participation. Such intention or action can be evidenced by: Subletting the unit, · Establishing a second residence, · Having a second or vacation home, Unit is Not Sole Signing another lease. • Schedule a pre-termination meeting with the household to discuss the situation and to review any possible mitigating circumstances.

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participation.

Absent a compelling reason for why the household is not using the contract unit as their sole residence, terminate the household's MRVP

			_	
Vacating / Abandoning the Unit	If the household has vacat unit in violation of the least terminate the household's Vacated: If the entire ho the unit for more than 3 or collectively, in any 12-without prior approval from the unit vacated and protermination, even if the to return to the unit and the tenant rent share. Abandoned: Typically, wabandoned, most if not possessions are removed the household has no int the unit may be considered.	se and/or voucher, MRVP participation. usehold is gone from 0 days, consecutively month period om the AA, consider ceed with household may intend may continue to pay then a unit is all of the household's of from the unit. When tention of returning,		
73				
Vacating / Abandoning the	* Although no warning letter meeting is required prior to attempt to locate the house the reason for vacating. * Send a termination notice to last known address, unders household may not receive	o termination, shold and determine o the household at the tanding that the		
Unit Transphalae at	<ul> <li>If the household can provid why vacating the unit was r claim of domestic violence, still be eligible for MRVP an into MRVP.</li> </ul>	necessary, such as a the household may		
74				
of one or more cont defined in M.G.L. c.	ber is a current illegal user rolled substances (as 94C §1), terminate the			
household's MRVP p • This includes use o	participation. of substances at a location	Illegal Drug Use		
other than the cor	natract unit or premises			
substance.	ia is flot a controlled			

<ul> <li>A person's illegal use of a controlled substance within the preceding 12 months creates a presumption that such person is a current illegal user of a controlled substance.</li> </ul>		
<ul> <li>However, this presumption may be mitigated if the household can sufficiently demonstrate that the person has permanently ceased all illegal use of controlled substances.</li> </ul>	Illegal Drug Use	
<ul> <li>Consider any efforts of treatment or rehabilitation as a mitigating circumstance when deciding if termination from MRVP is</li> </ul>		
appropriate.		
76	76	
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<ul> <li>Schedule a pre-termination meeting with the head of household and the household</li> </ul>		
member who engaged in illegal drug use (if not the head of household) to discuss the		
incident(s). The AA must determine whether it is more likely than not that illegal drug use	Illegal Drug Use	
occurred.  • Consider all mitigating circumstances,		-
including efforts to stop using illegal substances.		
	η	
77		
<ul> <li>If the household member who used illegal substances is not the head of household and is removed from the household, termination is not necessary.</li> </ul>		
<ul> <li>When deciding on termination, consider the severity of the action and past incidents.</li> </ul>		
Note that if a household member, who is not the head of household, is arrested or convicted	Illegal Drug Use	
for the manufacture or production of methamphetamine, the household member		
must be removed from the household. If the household member is not removed from the		
household, the household must be terminated from MRVP.		
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78		

# Intentional Damages Intentional Damages In the household or any of the members of the household cause intentional damages to the contract unit in an amount exceeding 2 months of rent during any 1-year period, the household is subject to termination from MRVP. Schedule a pre-termination meeting with the head of household and the household member who caused the damages. If the household member who caused the damages is not the head of household and is removed from the household, termination is not necessary.

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# If the damage was caused by documented domestic violence and the perpetrator is no longer in the household, termination shall not be pursued. When deciding on termination, the full extent of the damages, mitigating circumstances (including domestic violence), and past behavior shall be considered.

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- If a household fails to accurately report income and as a result subsidy is overpaid on their behalf, determine if the failure was due to error or fraud by the family.
- If determined to be due to error by the family, offer a repayment agreement. If due to fraud, terminate the household's MRVP participation.

Failure to Report Changes in Income or Household Composition

• If a household fails to reports changes to its composition, determine if the failure was due to error or fraud by the family. **Report Changes** • Failure to report additions due to birth, adoption, or court ordered custody in a timely manner is often error. Households may purposely fail to report new household members because of income or because the additional member is ineligible for MRVP, which constitutes fraud. Any guest who stays in the unit for more than 30 days, consecutively or collectively, in any 12-month period is considered a household member for the purposed of tenant rent chare calculation and must be Report Changes in Income or added to the household following all MRVP guidelines. • If the person is ineligible for MRVP, then either the person must leave the household, or the voucher will be terminated for failure to comply with the MRVP voucher. • If the failure to report a change in household composition is determined to be due to error, add the household member and offer a repayment agreement, if necessary to account for an increase in tenant rent share required due to the income of the additional household Report Changes • In cases where fraud is suspected but cannot be verified (i.e., it cannot be confirmed the unreported household member is living in the contract unit), give the household the opportunity to add the household member and

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enter into a repayment agreement, if appropriate. In cases of verified fraud, terminate the household's MRVP participation.

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- Schedule a pre-termination meeting with the household to discuss the situation. A repayment agreement may be offered at this time.
- In cases of unreported income or income discrepancy found via wage match, give the household time to submit documentation regarding the unreported income.
- If the household refuses to sign the repayment agreement or does not submit satisfactory documentation, or in cases of fraud, terminate the household's MRVP participation.

Report Changes in Income or Household

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#### Death of Only Household Member

- If the head of household is the only household member and dies, the household is automatically terminated from MRVP, effective the end of the month of the death, regardless of when the owner and/or AA was informed of the death.
- Neither family members of the participant nor anyone else may make claim to the voucher and be awarded it.
- No notification is required prior to termination, except for the termination notice, and grievances may not be filed.

Training Module 48

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- If during an administrative transfer a household with a project-based voucher is offered a projectbased unit that is the appropriate size and refuses the offer without good cause, terminate the household's MRVP participation.
- Good cause may be a reasonable accommodation or work, school, or health reason.
- Similarly, if the household with a project-based voucher in need of an administrative transfer is offered a mobile voucher and does not accept the voucher or ultimately sign a lease with the mobile voucher within the allotted timeframe, terminate the household's MRVP participation.

Refusing an Offer of Housing Assistance— Project-Based Only

• In most circumstances, if a household with a project-based voucher ceases to reside in the No Longer Residing in Unit—Projectproject-based unit, the voucher terminates, and the household is not entitled to any MRVP benefits. • The AA may warn the household of the **Based Only** ramifications of leaving the unit, but no notice is required prior to termination. · Grievances may not be filed. 88 • If a household is issued a mobile voucher and does not locate a suitable unit and submit an RFPP within 120 days (plus any approved extensions) the voucher will expire, and the household is not entitled to further benefits under MRVP. • Note that if a mobile voucher is issued for relocation not due to a decrease in voucher size Mobile Only or administrative transfer and the household does not find a suitable unit within the voucher search period, the household may remain in the current unit and the owner may continue to receive voucher payments if the owner agrees and AA approves. 89 • Inform the household at the time of issuance and 30 days before the voucher expires that if the voucher expires the household will be terminated. In the notice, explain the participant may request an extension or reasonable accommodation. • No other notice is required prior to termination. • Grievances may not be filed for the voucher expiration. However, a family could file a grievance that

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the AA failed to do something properly.

Brain Teaser #1							
	Reason for Termination	Pre-Termination Meeting Required?	Able to File a Grievance?				
1	Failure to comply with repayment agreement						
2	Eviction for cause						
3	Falsified application						
4	Criminal activity						
5	Failure to comply with MRVP voucher						
6	Vacating/abandoning unit						
7	Death of sole household member						
8	No longer residing in unit (project-based)						
9	Voucher expiration (mobile voucher)		91				

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#### Grievances

- In the context of MRVP, a grievance is:
- An allegation by a participant that an AA or an AA employee has acted or failed to act in accordance with any statute, regulation, or rule regarding the program and/or conditions of participation; and
- That the alleged action or failure to act has adversely affected the status, rights, duties, or welfare of the grievant or a household member.

Training Modul

#### Grievances

- The following cannot be the subject of a grievance:
- The meaning of a statute, regulation, or rule;
- A dispute between a participant and another participant, neighbor, or household member, in which the AA is not involved.
- A grievance cannot be filed by a household member who is not the head of household, on behalf of the head of household or any household member of another participant.

Training Module

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#### **Grievance Procedures**

- All grievances related to termination for MRVP must be initiated by a program participant in writing and mailed or delivered to the AA at its main office within 14 calendar days after the date of the termination notice
- The AA has discretion to permit a grievance to be initiated late. Permit
  additional time for initiation of a grievance if there was a good reason for
  late initiation of the grievance (such as a reasonable accommodation)
  and that the late initiation would not cause prejudice to the AA.
- All grievances must be initiated within 6 months of the date of the termination notice or the date on which the grievant first became aware or should have become aware of the subject matter of the grievance.

Training Module #8

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#### Informal Settlement Conference

- Promptly after the initiation of a grievance, offer the grievant the opportunity to discuss the grievance informally in an attempt to settle the grievance without the necessity of a grievance hearing. The grievant must request an informal settlement conference be scheduled.
- Give reasonable advance notice (at least 7 calendar days) to the grievant and their representative of a time and place for an informal settlement conference.

Training Module

#### Informal Settlement Conference

- If the matter is not resolved at the informal settlement conference, hold a grievance hearing.
- Failure to attend an informal settlement conference does not affect a grievant's right to a grievance hearing.

Training Module #

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#### Hearing Date and Notice of Hearing

- Schedule a grievance hearing regarding whether good cause exists for terminating a voucher within 21 days or as soon as reasonably practical after the date on which the AA receives the grievance.
- Give reasonable advance written notice (at least 7 calendar days) of the time and place of the hearing to the grievant and to their representative.
- If a grievant fails to appear at a grievance hearing without prior notice unless due to an emergency, the AA may give the grievant one more opportunity to attend a grievance hearing. If the grievant fails to attend two grievance hearings, the grievance shall be dismissed, and the AA's initial decision will be final.

Training Module #8

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# Pre-Hearing Examination of Relevant Documents

- Prior to a grievance hearing, give the grievant or their representative a reasonable opportunity to examine AA documents which are directly relevant to the grievance.
- Following a timely request, provide copies of such documents to the grievant and for good cause (including financial hardship), the AA may waive the charge for the copies.

Training Module

#### **Procedure at Grievance Hearings**

- A hearing panel or the hearing officer must conduct the grievance hearing in a fair manner without undue delay.
- The hearing panel or the hearing officer must initially take appropriate steps to define the issues.
- Thereafter, relevant information, including testimony of witnesses and written material, will be received regarding such issues. Both the grievant and the AA are entitled to question each other's witnesses.

Training Modu

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#### **Procedure at Grievance Hearings**

- Procedure at the hearing shall be informal, and formal rules of evidence shall not apply.
- The hearing must be recorded.
- The members of the hearing panel or the hearing officer may:
- Question witnesses and may take notice of matters of common knowledge and applicable laws, regulations and AA rules and policies.
- Request the AA or the grievant to produce additional, relevant information or which is necessary for a decision to be made provided that the other party is provided an opportunity to respond to such additional information.

Training Module #8

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#### Written Decision and Effect of Decision

- Within 14 calendar days following the hearing or as soon thereafter as reasonably possible, the hearing panel or the hearing officer must provide the AA with a written decision on the grievance, describing the factual situation and ordering whatever relief, if any, appropriate under the circumstances and under applicable laws, regulations, rules and/or policies.
- The decision must be based only on the evidence presented at the grievance hearing and such additional information as may have been requested by the panel members or the hearing officer.
- The copy of the decision must also include information on how the grievant may request a review by the AA's board or other equivalent body and a timeframe for doing so.

Training Module #

## Review by the AA's Board or Other Equivalent Body

- The grievant or the AA may request review of the decision by the AA's Board or other equivalent body, as designated by the AA.
- The AA's Board may review the decision, or the AA may appoint another equivalent body, subject to approval by EOHLC.
- The other equivalent body does not need to be an AA employee or Board.
- Two or more AAs may share responsibilities for reviewing decisions.
- An equivalent body may be, but is not limited to, an appointed review board or the Executive Director of the AA.

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### Review by the AA's Board or Other Equivalent Body

- The body that reviews the decision must:
- Have extensive knowledge of MRVP, Budget Line Item language and regulations, and all EOHLC guidance;
- Have extensive knowledge of related laws, regulations, and AA policies and procedures;
- Not consist, entirely or in part, of the hearing panel or hearing officer that issued the decision;
- $^{\circ}$  Not have a vested interest, financial or otherwise, in the decision or the subject matter; and
- Maintain confidentiality surrounding the grievant and all personal information.

Training Module #8

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# Review by the AA's Board or Other Equivalent Body

- The Board or other equivalent body must promptly decide whether to uphold, set aside or modify the decision after permitting the AA and grievant to make oral presentations and submit documentation.
- The Board or other equivalent body may also permit the hearing officer or hearing panel to make a presentation.
- The decision of the Board or other equivalent body must be in writing and explain its reasoning.

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#### Review by EOHLC—Terminations Only

- If the AA's Board or other equivalent body makes a material change in a
  decision of the hearing panel or hearing officer, upon written request of
  the AA or grievant made within 14 days of mailing or other delivery of
  the decision, EOHLC will review the decision of the Board or other
  equivalent body.
- EOHLC may request written documentation from the parties.
- EOHLC will review all submitted materials and render a written decision after consideration of the facts presented upholding, setting aside or modifying the decision of the Board or other equivalent body.
- EOHLC only reviews grievances filed regarding termination of MRVP assistance. EOHLC does not review any other grievances.

Trainine Module :

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#### Effect of a Decision on a Grievance

- The last rendered decision on a grievance is binding between the AA and the grievant with respect to the particular circumstances involved in the grievance, provided that a participant must exhaust all administrative remedies prior to seeking review in court.
- If a participant does not timely pursue the appropriate administrative remedy in accordance with the grievance process and timeframes specified in this chapter and 760 CMR 49.00, that level of review is deemed waived.

Training Module

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#### Effect of a Decision on a Grievance

- If a court has jurisdiction to determine a matter which has been subject to decision on a grievance, the court's determination on the matter supersedes the decision on the grievance.
- As between the AA and any person who was not a grievant, the decision on a grievance shall have no binding effect.

Training Module A

#### Voucher Payments During Grievances

- Continue to pay the voucher payment to the owner on behalf of the MRVP participant, until the MRVP participant's voucher has been terminated and the MRVP participant has ceased to pursue the grievance process.
- If a court of competent jurisdiction orders the AA to continue making voucher payments, continue to do so (as long as the participant remains in the contract unit) and alert EOHLC immediately.

Training Module

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### Questions?

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#### **Key Takeaways**

- There is a distinction between participant error and participant fraud, and the appropriate actions for each differ.
- Procedures related to termination of MRVP assistance may vary by the reason for termination.
- The grievance process and procedures exist to allow an MRVP participant to dispute an action or inaction by an AA or AA staff person adversely affecting the participant.
- Refer to Chapter 17 (Terminations and Grievances) of the MRVP Administrative Plan as needed.

Training Module #

