



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING &
LIVABLE COMMUNITIES**

Maura T. Healey, Governor ◆ Kimberley Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor ◆ Edward M. Augustus Jr., Secretary

Public Housing Notice 2025-03

To: All Local Housing Authority Executive Directors
From: Ben Stone, Undersecretary of Public Housing and Rental Assistance
Subject: Amended Housing Situation Priority Policy for CSO
Date: March 10, 2025

Need to Know: The Massachusetts Legislature has updated the definition of “Abuse” contained in the Abuse Prevention Act to include “coercive control”.

EOHLC has amended its Housing Situation Priority Policy (HSPP) for CSO (Centralized Screening Office) to reflect the amended definition in Priority 4(C).

EOHLC has amended Priority 4(A) in the HSPP for CSO to reflect the change in title from No Fault Loss of Housing to Court Ordered Eviction.

On June 20, 2024, Governor Healey signed [Chapter 118 of the Acts of 2024](#) into law. A portion of the law amended the definition of “Abuse” contained in the Abuse Prevention Act ([M.G.L. c. 209A](#)).

Specifically, this law expanded the definition of “Abuse” to include “coercive control”. Coercive control is defined as, either:

- (1) a pattern of behavior intended to threaten, intimidate, harass, isolate, control, coerce or compel compliance of a family or household member that causes that family or household member to reasonably fear physical harm or have a reduced sense of physical safety or autonomy, including but not limited to:
 - a. isolating the family or household member’s activities, communications, movements, finances, economic resources or access to services, including through technological means;
 - b. depriving the family or household member of basic needs;
 - c. controlling, regulating, or monitoring the family or household member’s activities, communications, movements, finances, economic resources or access to services, including through technological means;
 - d. compelling a family or household member to abstain from or engage in a specific behavior or activity, including engaging in criminal activity;

- e. threatening to harm a child or relative of the family or household member;
 - f. threatening to commit cruelty or abuse to an animal connected to the family or household member;
 - g. intentionally damaging property belonging to the family or household member;
 - h. threatening to publish sensitive personal information relating to the family or household member, including sexually explicit images; or
 - i. using repeated court actions found by a court not to be warranted by existing law or good faith argument; or
- (2) a single act intended to threaten, intimidate, harass, isolate, control, coerce, or compel compliance of a family or household member that causes the family or household member to reasonably fear physical harm or have a reduced sense of physical safety or autonomy of:
- a. harming or attempting to harm a child or relative of the family or household member;
 - b. committing or attempting to commit abuse to an animal connected to the family or household member; or
 - c. publishing or attempting to publish sexually explicit images of the family or household member.

The definition of “Family or household members” is unchanged. Family or household members are individuals who are or were related by blood or marriage, have a child together, or who now or formerly resided in the same household or dated each other.

EOHLC uses the definition of “Abuse” from the Abuse Prevention Act in its [Housing Situation Priority Policy](#) for the Centralized Screening Office. Effective with this PHN, EOHLC updates the Housing Situation Priority Policy to reflect the expanded definition of “Abuse.”

With this PHN EOHLC also renames Priority 4(A) to “Court-Ordered Eviction”. This will clarify the requirements to grant an applicant Priority 4(A). Prior to the renaming Priority 4(A) was titled “No-Fault Loss of Housing”. This did not clearly identify that an applicant needed a no-fault eviction or court order to vacate to qualify for the priority. Specifically, the applicant must provide :

- an official eviction order or other Housing Court, District Court, or Boston Municipal Court judgment; or
- another court document requiring tenant to vacate, such as an agreement between applicant and landlord in an eviction proceeding, including but not limited to an Agreement for Judgment or Agreement of the Parties.
- These documents cannot show eviction for cause.

Applicants often did not understand that a Notice to Quit alone was not sufficient documentation to be eligible for Priority 4(A). For an applicant to be eligible for Priority 4(A) Court Ordered Eviction, the eviction order or agreement between the landlord and applicant must specify a “no fault” reason for the eviction and cannot list any monetary damages for unpaid rent or damages. EOHLC policy considers an agreement between the applicant and the landlord as “no-fault” so long as the applicant does not owe rent or damages and does not agree that they violated their lease.

A copy of the updated policy is attached to this PHN along with the [Priority 1-4 Checklist](#).

Attachment A: Housing Situation Priority Policy for CSO (02/2025)

Attachment B: Priority 1- 4 Checklist