

Referrals to Nonfinancial Assistance

RAA Office Hours

April 29, 2022



WELCOME



Asking Questions

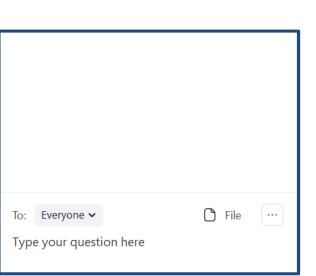
We will be monitoring the Q&A for questions



Click "Q&A" to submit a question (or "Raise Hand" to share a verbal question at designated breaks)

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Enter your question into the "Q&A" box

We will follow up with answers to any questions that we don't get to during the session

THIS CALL IS BEING RECORDED







Our Journey Today 60 MINUTES





Purpose



Discuss **referrals to nonfinancial assistance** and provide reminders about situations in which RAAs should make **referrals**

Goal

Provide RAA staff with **guidance and continued support** related to RAFT, and other EDI programs

REFERRALS CONTEXT



- After April 15, DHCD closed door to ERAP applications. With a \$7,000 benefit limit for RAFT, there will be more people for whom emergency payment assistance won't solve their housing crisis (e.g. applicant owes more than the RAFT maximum benefit of \$7,000).
- With a smaller RAFT benefit cap, nonfinancial services will play a larger role for some applicants. Today, we will review the referral process for the following programs:
 - <u>Community Mediation</u>: a neutral, trained third party works with the tenant and landlord to find mutually agreeable solutions that work for both parties to encourage settlements
 - <u>Legal Services</u>: DHCD-funded legal services provide limited legal representation to income-eligible tenants and small landlords in connection with eviction cases due to nonpayment of rent.
 - <u>Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP) and EDI-TPP</u>: a homelessness prevention program that provides shortterm case management (TPP) or RAFT application support and referrals (EDI-TPP) for certain households
- Majority of referrals process is not changing, with 2 exceptions:
 - No longer need landlord consent to refer to mediation
 - No longer use the release form

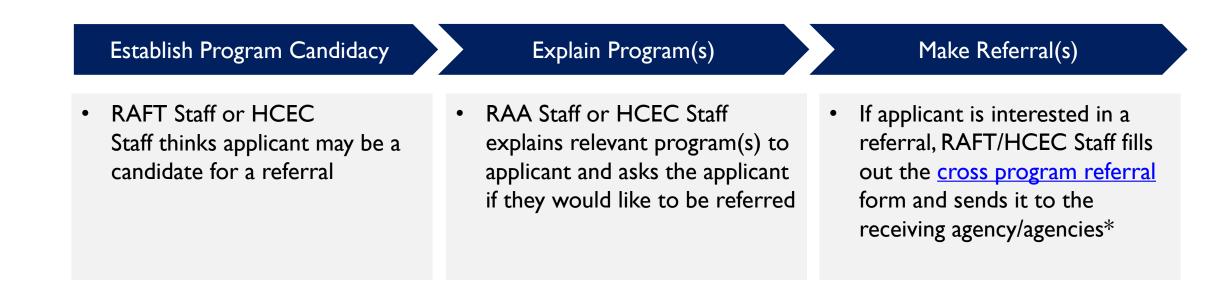


- Always refer if:
 - Ineligible for RAFT
 - Emergency payment assistance (RAFT) won't solve housing crisis (e.g.: applicant owes more than the RAFT benefit of \$7,000)
- In some instances:
 - You might refer to non-financial services while the RAFT application is still being processed (e.g. the household is court involved for eviction, without legal representation)
 - You might refer to more than one service, if multiple services are needed by the household
- More details on next slide and throughout the training



- Referrals Guidance: Use your existing process, if you have one, whether it is referring from your HCEC staff or RAFT staff - we are not trying to do any major redesigning of your internal process at this time
 - DHCD understands some RAA/HCECs have case management systems or other processes that mean RAFT staff will refer to Special Services Coordinators/HCECs and then HCECs will refer to the receiving agency
 - RAFT Staff can also refer to any of these services directly if that works for you and your RAA/HCEC
- At this time, both methods are ok (RAFT Staff refer or HCEC Staff refer) as long as the steps to refer get completed



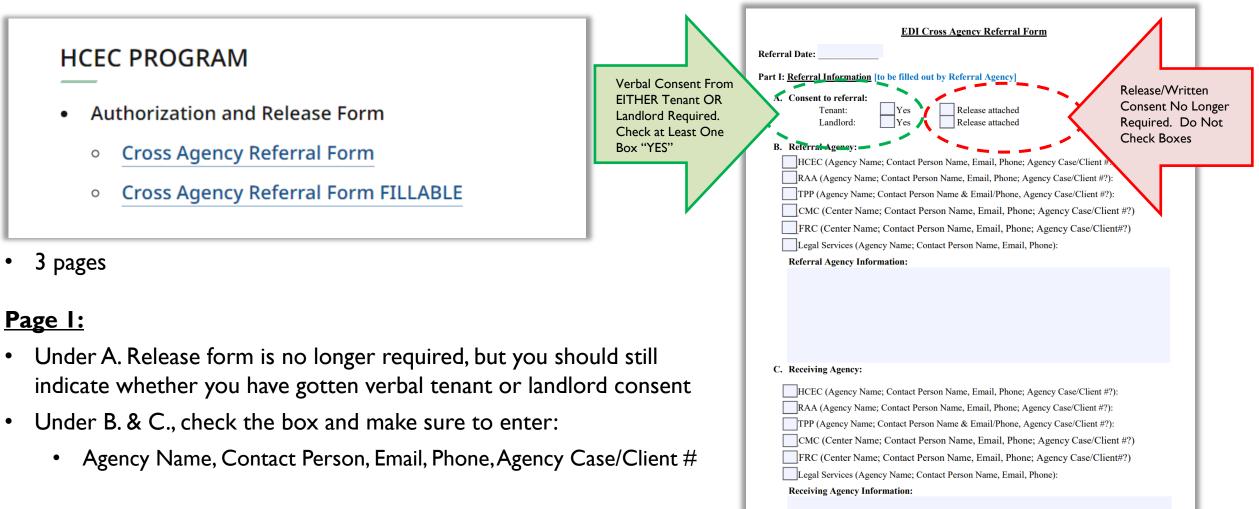


***NOTE:** Authorization Release Form No Longer Required

- When we started EDI, we initially were asking RAFT Staff/HCEC Staff to use an authorization release form, but learned from mediation and legal services that they prefer to use their own forms upon intake.
- The guidance is to no longer use this form.
- You should still check one of the boxes in the cross agency referral form indicating that tenant or landlord has given verbal consent
- But you do not have to check the release form box or fill out an authorization release form



Cross Agency Referral Form (link) can be accessed via the RAA Resource Portal:



CROSS AGENCY REFERRALS FORM (PAGE 2 & 3)



D. Parties: Tenant (Name, Email, Phone, Address): Tenant Attorney (Name, Email, Phone): Landlord Attorney (Name, Email, Phone):	F. Case Status: (check all that apply) COVID-related rental crisis -risk of eviction due to impact of COVID CDC Moratorium Declaration given to Landlord RAFT/ERMA Application filed or in process (Date of Application, if known:) Notice to Quit issued (no court involvement yet) (Date of Notice to Quit, if known:) Reason for Eviction:Non-payment of rentNo FaultOther Summons & Complaint filed in BMC, District Court or Housing Court: Are any court events scheduled? Include dates, if known: Other (please specify):
How many adults are there in the household? How many children are there in the household? Is anyone in your household pregnant? Y N How much is tenant's rent share? What is/are all household income source(s) and monthly amount(s)?	 G. Reason for Referral to Community Mediation: (check all that apply): Parties seek a confidential setting and flexible process to resolve the dispute High level of conflict between the parties – relationships are frayed Communication problems exist between the parties Different levels of knowledge and access to information Both or only one party is represented by an attorney Issues are complex, involve multiple parties and/or require specialized expertise Other (please specify):
Please check type of housing: Section 8 Voucher (Administering Agency for Section 8: Massachusetts Rental Voucher (MRVP) Project-based subsidy Public housing Private market Please check here if unknown and needs to be clarified (describe)	 H. Referral to Legal Services: (check all that apply): All cases at the Notice to Quit stage should be referred to Legal Services if the person is low income (up to 200% federal poverty level). Landlords must be the owner occupants of two or three family properties. Notice to quit issued or case is in court Other I. Brief Description of Dispute:



SERVICES SPECIFICS



COMMUNITY MEDIATION

SERVICES PROVIDED BY COMMUNITY MEDIATION



- Overview:
 - Massachusetts Community Mediation Centers (CMCs) offer free mediation between landlords and tenants for lease disputes.
 - Mediation utilizes a neutral, trained third party to find mutually agreeable solutions that work for both parties to encourage settlements
 - Mediation can help the parties resolve their differences before a court case is filed
 - If a case is in District Court, the court may refer parties to mediation (Housing Court uses their own Housing Court Specialists).
 - Mediation services complement and often occur in parallel to RAFT application reviews
 - Website: <u>https://www.resolutionma.org/housing</u>

• Service provided by Community Mediation:

- A mediator helps people resolve differences based on what is important to them through a confidential process
- Uses informed consent and prioritizes mutually agreeable solutions
- Benefits:
 - Agreements reached collaboratively are more adhered to
 - Gives parties a chance to speak and be heard
 - Allows for creative, flexible solutions



Eligibility:

- People with any income (there is no income limitation for eligibility)
- Free
- Either or both parties *can* be represented by an attorney, but legal representation is not required to participate in mediation

Parties **should** be referred to community mediation when:

- Tenant owes more than RAFT can cover
- Landlord and tenant disagree on the amount of rent owed
- Applicant has been denied RAFT
- Applicant has not been denied RAFT, but the landlord is not responsive to ongoing communication from the RAA



Other reasons you may refer tenant to community mediation:

- ☐ High level of conflict between the parties relationships are frayed
- Communication problems exist between the parties
- Different levels of knowledge and access to information
- Issues are complex, involve multiple parties and/or require specialized expertise



I. RAFT/HCEC Staff refers client to the CMC

- Determines correct CMC through referencing RAA/CMC guide
- Fills out EDI Cross Agency Referral form
- Sends to designated CMC (emails to center's point of contact) with the cross agency referral form
- 2. Mediation Coordinator obtains written consent and landlord information from tenant
- 3. Mediator reaches out to landlord to obtain landlord consent

CONTACT LIST FOR RAA/COMMUNITY MEDIATION REFERRALS



RAA	Associated Community Mediation Center	Contact Information
Berkshire Housing Development Corporation	Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority	Noah Barnes <u>Noahb@bcrha.com</u> (413) 225-1186
Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance (CMHA)	Mediation Services of North Central MA	Teena Juby <u>Housing@mediationncm.org</u> (978) 466-9595
Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI)	Middlesex Community College Law Center	Jessica Taylor Jtaylor29@mail.middlesex.edu (978) 656-3342
Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority	Collaborative Resolutions Group	Ruth Seal <u>Rseal@crg-collab.org</u> (413) 636-1402
Housing Assistance Corporation (HAC)	Martha's Vineyard Mediation Program	Paula Reidbord admin@mvmediation.org (508) 693-2199
Lynn Housing Authority and Neighborhood Development (LHAND)	North Shore Community Mediation Center	Adriana Jimenez Adriana@nsmediation.org (617) 752-2143
Metro Housing Boston (Metro/MHB)	Metropolitan Mediation Services	Antonio Castro Aranda nmichelen@fscm.org (617) 241-0300
NeighborWorks Housing Solutions	Greater Brockton Center for Dispute Resolution	Nancy Sarcevicz nsarcevicz.gbcdr@gmail.com 508-756-4646 x224
RCAP Solutions	Family Services Center of Central MA	Norka Michelen <u>Dnolli@fscm.org</u> (508) 756-4646 x224
South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC)	MetroWest Mediation Services	Li Morrison li@metrowestmediation.org (508) 960-9336
Way Finders	Collaborative Resolutions Group	Ruth Seal <u>Rseal@crg-collab.org</u> (413) 636-1402

CONTACT LIST FOR ALL COMMUNITY MEDIATION CENTERS



Community Mediation Center & Center Location	Interim Coordinator Name(s) for Housing Mediation	Title	Email	Phone
Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority, Pittsfield	Kayla Allen Noah Barnes	Program Director Case Coordinator	<u>Kaylaw@bcrha.com</u> <u>Noahb@bcrha.com</u>	413-344-8153 413-225-1186
Collaborative Resolutions Group, Greenfield	Ruth Seal	Program Coordinator	<u>rseal@crg-collab.org</u>	(413) 636-1402
Community Dispute Settlement Center, Cambridge	Yes Miller	Case Coordinator	cdschousing@communitydispute.org	(857) 216-9660
Family Services Center of Central MA, Worcester	Sabrina Bohun Norka Michelen	Director	sbohun@fscm.org nmichelen@fscm.org	508-756-4646 ext 224
Greater Brockton Center for Dispute Resolution, Brockton	Ron Fredey Nancy Sarcevicz	Coordinator HMP Coordinator	<u>Rfredey@gmail.com</u> nsarcevicz@gbcdr.org	508-897-2868 508-897-2867
MetroWest Mediation Services, Framingham	Li Morrison	Coordinator	li@metrowestmediation.org	781 591 0866
Middlesex Community College Law Center, Lowell	Jessica Taylor	Case Coordinator	Jtaylor29@middlesex.mass.edu	978-656-3342
Mediation Services of N Central MA, Leominster	Lisa Wood Teena Juby	Executive Director Case Coordinator	lwood@mediationncm.org Housing@mediationncm.org	978-466-9595 978 728 9686
Metropolitan Mediation Services, Brookline	Antonio P. Castro Aranda Kenyatta Saunders	Executive Director Case Coordinator	Antonio.Castro@metromediation.org Kenyatta.Saunders@metromediation.org	617-241-0300 617 608 9516
Martha' Vineyard Mediation Program	Paula Reidbord	HMP Case Manager	Admin@mvmediation.org	(508)693-2199
North Shore Community Mediation Services, Beverly	Adriana Jimenez	HMP Case Coordinator	adriana@nsmediation.org	617-752-2143



LEGAL SERVICES



- Overview: Legal services are available to low-income tenants and owner-occupant landlords (generally for households at or below 200% FPL, or 300% for 'low bono' landlord cases)
 - Regional legal aid organizations (LAOs) provide tenant-landlord services, in addition to a range of civil legal issues
 - Goal for both clients: avoid eviction proceedings
- **Primary purpose** of DHCD-funded legal services program is to assist clients in connection with eviction cases due to nonpayment of rent
- Services Provided: Current program focuses on limited representation in order to maximize the number of clients served this includes:
 - Brief advice and counsel
 - Tier I (pre-trial) representation (Filing and arguing motions prior to Tier I; Court representation; Vacate defaults due to failure to appear)



- RAFT/HCEC Staff may want to refer to Legal Services if:
 - A tenant has applied for RAFT and indicated "eviction" as their housing crisis, and the tenant does not have legal representation
 - A tenant has applied for RAFT with another housing crisis but has attached a copy of an NTQ or a court summons, and the tenant does not have legal representation

HOW TO REFER TO LEGAL SERVICES?





To refer to legal services:

- For now, go to the HED fuel site, and use the phone number listed for that region
- Ask the LAO if they would like • to receive the referral form. If so, fill it out and email them. If not, give the LAO the information over the phone.



- LAOs operate by region not exact match with RAA geography but RAAs can use this lookup tool found at https://hedfuel.azurewebsit es.net/
 - Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP) provides services to owner-occupant landlords across the state
 - VLP manages all three Boston-area tenant LAOs (includes De Novo and GBLS)



TPP AND EDI-TPP



Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP) and EDI-TPP:

- TPP is a homelessness prevention program, operating collaboratively with the Housing Court Department and functioning as a neutral party to the landlord and tenant
- **TPP** works with individuals and families with disabilities, behavioral health disorders, and complex health needs that are interfering with the tenant's ability to fulfill the terms of the lease
- EDI-TPP, an expansion of TPP started under the state's Eviction Diversion Initiative, works with households experiencing a housing crisis, targeting high barrier households who are unable to otherwise access RAFT or other stabilization services

TPP and EDI-TPP are administered by five regional non-profit providers of clinical and/or homeless services.



Who can TPP help?

- TPP helps people with disabilities, behavioral health or complex health needs:
 - If it seems like an underlying disorder is leading to disagreement w/landlord, then the client might be a good fit for TPP (compared to another service, like mediation)
 - E.g. Hoarding issues or cannot keep the house clean because of a physical disability, such as inability to climb stairs or lift things, etc.; Forgets to pay rent due to brain injury

Services Provided by TPP

- TPP specialists function much like classic social workers. Specialists assess the reasons for the eviction and the underlying disability/health issues, identify needed services, develop a service plan to maintain the tenancy, and monitor the household until stabilized
- For cases in Housing Court, TPP makes recommendations to the Court
 - For example, a person with a brain injury cannot remember to pay their rent on time. TPP recommends
 a representative payee to pay their rent/bills regularly. The Court typically agrees with TPP's recommendations and
 includes it in a court order.



Who can EDI-TPP help?

- EDI-TPP has different eligibility and provides different services, compared to TPP.
- It does not require a disability for eligibility, but will prioritize EA-eligible households (family with kids <21 or pregnant & 115% FPL), households at risk of domestic violence, and low-income seniors (80% AMI or below).

Services Provided by EDI-TPP

- Assist with the RAFT process, completing applications, obtaining documentation, etc., as well as assess for social service needs and make necessary referrals.
- Help any applicants stuck on any part of the application process eg: (uploading forms, getting forms from landlord, verification documents ID/income, etc.)

TPP & EDI-TPP ELIGIBILITY COMPARISON



Requirements	TPP	EDI-TPP
Disability	Yes (ADA definition)	No
Lease violation	Yes	Yes
Rent Affordability	Yes	Yes
Household participation	Yes	Yes
Landlord or Court participation	Yes	Yes
Priorities	Court referral or Subsidized tenancy	EA eligible, Domestic Violence, or Low- Income Seniors (62+)

If you are not sure if a client is better fit for TPP or EDI-TPP, you can refer to either program.

- Also, when in doubt, refer to TPP. Over-referring to TPP is preferable to under referring, because TPP has capacity and can re-refer to legal services, mediation, or other services if necessary
- <u>With client consent</u>, staff should refer to TPP if they suspect a disability or health issue or to EDI-TPP if they think the client could be a good fit for the program, even if they are not sure
 - TPP is able to fully assess the situation and make a determination if someone can be served by TPP or EDI-TPP. If not, TPP providers can refer the client back to mediation or legal services.
 - Similarly, if mediation determines dispute is due to behavioral health/disorder, they may refer to TPP

WHEN AND HOW TO REFER TO TPP AND EDI-TPP?



TPP or EDI-TPP referrals can be made by anyone at any time, except for post-eviction move-outs.

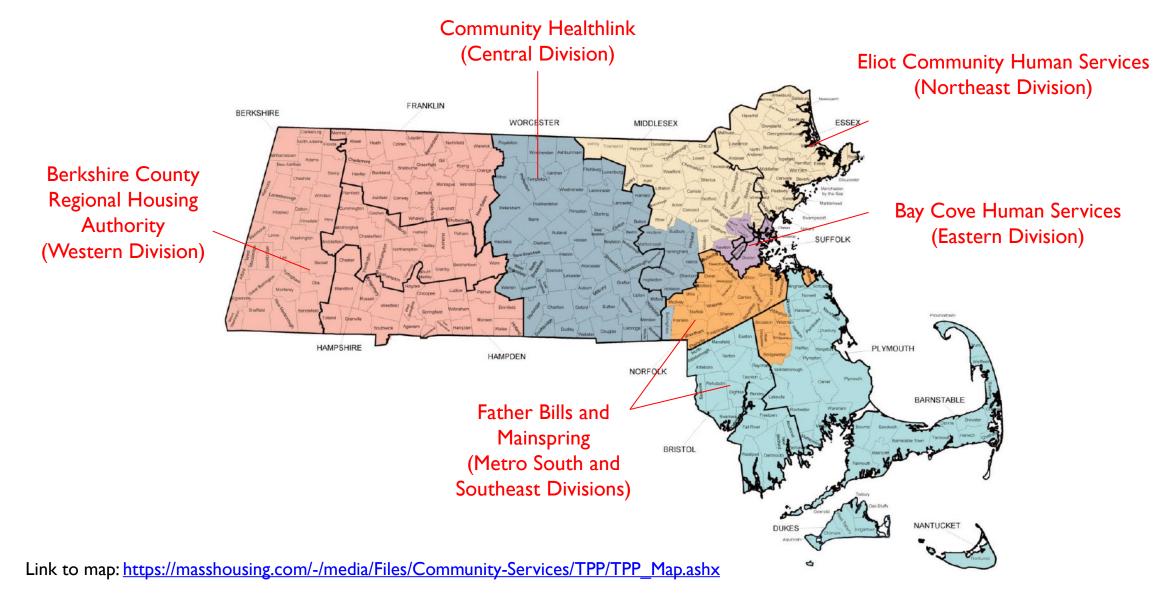
- If a tenant expresses social service needs/concerns or exhibiting behaviors that are jeopardizing their tenancy...
- If a tenant expresses concerns/confusion about completing the RAFT application or you have concerns...
- If a tenant self discloses that they have a health condition (physical or behavioral/mental)...
- If client has *not* disclosed a behavioral health or developmental problem, but you think they would be a good fit for TPP or EDI-TPP, you can refer them and say:
 - "It sounds like you are having some issues with (people, process, etc.) There is this program and they are social workers and they are there to help people get the resources they need to help them from becoming homeless. Would you be interested in a referral to this program?"

How to Refer to TPP and EDI-TPP

- **General Guidance:T**o make a referral to TPP/EDI-TPP, email the TPP program director (contact information on Slide 32) with a completed cross-program referral form.
 - If you have pre-established communication channels (phone, etc.) with your local TPP provider, feel free to use those
- RAFT Staff/HCEC Staff <u>do not</u> need to get landlord consent before making a referral.
 - TPP providers will do this, and must get landlord consent unless TPP is court ordered
- For cases already in Housing Court, TPP will consult with the Court regarding delaying proceedings to allow for time to conduct an assessment and develop recommendations.

CONTACT MAP FOR TPP AND EDI-TPP REFERRALS





CONTACT LIST FOR TPP AND EDI-TPP REFERRALS



Tenancy Preservation Program

Providing Sustainable Homelessness Prevention for Individuals and Families with Disabilities

TPP works with tenants, including families, facing eviction as a result of behavior related to a disability.

TPP functions as a neutral party to the landlord and tenant.

In consultation with the Housing Court Department, TPP works with the landlord and tenant to determine whether the disability can be reasonably accommodated and the tenancy preserved.

TPP clinicians:

- · Assess the reasons for the eviction
- Identify needed services
- Develop a treatment plan to maintain the tenancy
- Monitor the case for as long as is necessary

TPP Contact Information For general information and referrals, please

For general information and referrals, pleas contact the TPP Director listed.

Western Division

Kim Borden, Director Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority 1 Fenn St, 4th floor

Pittsfield, MA 01201 Phone: 413.344.4818 kborden@bcrha.com.

Eastern Division

Ruth Harel-Garvey, Director Bay Cove Human Services 66 Canal Street Boston, MA 02114 Phone: 617.788.6211 Fax: 617.371.3100 rharel@baycove.org

Central Division

Amy Garner, Director Community Healthlink 162 Chandler Street Worcester, MA 01609 Phone: 508.438.5656 agarner@communityhealthlink.org

Northeast Division Heather Abrams, TPP Clinical Manager Eliot Community Human Services Northeast Housing Court 2 Appleton Street Lawrence, MA 01841 Phone: 978.687.7184 ext. 5022328 Fax: 978.689.7838 habrams@eliotchs.org

Metro South and Southeast Divisions Alyson Gibbs, Mar

Alyson Gibbs, Manager/Coordinator Father Bills & Mainspring 1 Knotty Walk Taunton, MA 02780 Phone: 508.944.9502 Fax: 508.977.2380 aqibbs@helpfbms.org

For more information or questions on EDI and EDI -TPP, contact

David Eng, MassHousing deng@masshousing.com

Generally, for referrals:

- There *is* a forum to discuss cases or issues with the providers in your region
- Going forward, TPP providers will convene at least quarterly meetings and will invite the EDI providers (RAAs, HCECs, legal services, mediation, TPP) in their region
- Please connect with the people in your organization who attend these meetings if there are items of concern or interests to raise at these meetings

SERVICES SUMMARY



Service	When to Refer	Eligibility	Services Provided
Mediation	 RAFT won't solve housing crisis or would be incompletely served by RAFT Dispute between landlord/tenant involves issues beyond nonpayment which might be resolved through mediation 	No income limits	 A neutral, trained mediator helps people resolve differences through a confidential process and helps reach an agreement that is beneficial to all parties Services are outside of the court system
Legal Services	 Tenant has "eviction" as housing crisis <u>and</u> does not have legal representation 	 NTQ or court summons < 200% FPL for pro bono services (either tenant or landlord cases) < 300% FPL for "low-bono" cases (only for small owner-occupant landlords) 	 Brief advice and counsel Tier I (pre-trial) representation
ΤΡΡ	 RAFT/HCEC Staff believes applicant may have a disability (behavioral health or physical) or health condition OR applicant self-discloses a disability that is connected to the lease violation RAFT/HCEC Staff is not sure where to refer applicant (TPP can do other referrals) 	 No income limits Disability (behavioral health or physical) or health condition in the household that is interfering with the tenant's ability to fulfill the terms of the lease 	• Case Management (intensive short- term case management, as well as providing information about referring to other services e.g.: bill paying services, personal care attendants, behavioral healthcare treatment)
EDI-TPP	 Applicant is struggling to complete the RAFT application RAA/HCEC is not sure where to refer applicant (TPP providers can do other referrals) 	 No income limits Preference for EA-eligible households (family with kids under 21), survivors of domestic violence, low-income seniors (80% AMI or below) 	 Helps with completing RAFT applications (e.g.: uploading documents, getting landlord documents)



QUESTIONS







SUPPORT & RESOURCES

RESOURCES



RAA Resource Portal

Central resource to provide RAA staff with key updates, training and learning opportunities, and helpful information to support programs

Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently asked questions that provide a policy overview and concise program guidance.

Mass.gov Search Mass.gov SEARCH O OFFERED BY Housing and Community Development **Regional Administering Agencies Resource** WELCOME TO THE REGIONAL ADMINISTERING AGENCIES (RAA) RESOURCE PORTAL DHCD is partnering with RAAs to create more cross learning and engagement opportunities so that we are better positioned to reach our shared goals. We invite RAA staff to use this page to learn about key updates, training and learning opportunities, and provide helpful information to support our programs. DHCD continues to work with RAAs to streamline and implement initiatives that support the

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administration of the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT). Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance (ERMA), and the Housing Consumer Education Centers of Massachusetts (HCEC) Programs. Thank you for your ongoing support of Massachusetts households. This repository of information is specifically intended to be used by RAAs so please avoid sharing this link with other parties.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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UPCOMING EVENTS EVICTION DIVERSION INITIATIVE (EDI) OVERVIEW EVICTION DIVERSION INITIATIVE (EDI) PROGRAMS

UPCOMING EVENTS

Office Hour Training sessions will occur every Friday from 1:00PM-2:00PM, covering a variety of topics aimed at sharing knowledge about EDI programming and increasing engagement with the RAAs. Weekly topics and dial-in information will be shared with RAA staff in advance of each session

Please note this document will be updated as information becomes available

Last Updated April 11, 2022

Emergency Housing Payment Assistance Program FAQ

REGIONAL ADMINISTERING AGENCIES



QUESTIONS





Further Questions

Direct questions to your supervisor and then contact the RAA support inbox (<u>dhcdraaraft@mass.gov</u>) as a point of escalations for questions. A member of the RAA Support Team will respond.

• **Time-sensitive Questions**: Critical questions that require responses within 24hrs should be submitted with a subject line that includes "**URGENT**."



Best Practice

Please **specify the program** that you are reaching out about to ensure that the DHCD RAA Support team is best positioned to provide policy guidance.



THANK YOU!

