



# Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING & LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

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

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Sheet for EA Family Shelter Warrant Checks

*Last Updated: April 11, 2025*

This FAQ provides general information about the Emergency Assistance (EA) Family Shelter eligibility criteria listed in 760 CMR 67.02 (11), which states that participants with outstanding defaults or arrest warrants issued by any court in Massachusetts are not eligible for EA Family Shelter if they do not have the warrant removed (“clear the warrant”) within 5 business days of notice.

#### **What is a warrant?**

An arrest warrant is an order issued by a judge that allows a police officer to arrest someone. An arrest warrant is often required before the police may make an arrest. A judge may issue a warrant to arrest you if they think there is a good reason to believe that you have committed a crime. This is called “probable cause.” A judge may also issue an arrest warrant if you do not show up to court. If you miss a court date, you should go to court as soon as possible to avoid being arrested.

#### **Why might you have a warrant?**

There are several reasons why you may have an outstanding warrant. Some examples include:

- not appearing for your court date
- not appearing for jury duty
- not paying court fees or fines
- probable cause that you have committed a crime; or
- a claim that you violated a court order, like a restraining order.

Specific details about your outstanding warrants can be found on the “Outstanding Warrants Sheet.”

#### **Why should you clear a warrant?**

If you want to remain or be placed in in EA Family Shelter, you must have the warrant removed (“clear the warrant”) within 5 business days of this notice. Clearing a warrant can also make it easier for you leave EA Family Shelter to stable housing and employment.

#### **How do you “clear” a warrant?**

It is important that you have the warrant cleared as soon as possible for you and your family to remain eligible for EA Family Shelter. To remove (or “clear”) the warrant, you must go to the courthouse that issued the warrant. To confirm if you have the right location, call the courthouse. Most courthouses in Massachusetts are open Monday through Friday, 8:30am until 4:30pm.

At the courthouse, you will go to the clerk’s office and tell them that you are there to clear a warrant. The clerk will send the paperwork to the courtroom to be discussed in front of a judge. You may have to wait some time before your case is called. You may be asked to admit that you committed a crime (plead guilty). It is important for you to know that being charged with certain crimes or being convicted of certain crimes (changing your plea to guilty) in the state of Massachusetts may lead to your (and potentially your family members) removal from shelter.



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### **What if you do not have a lawyer?**

The judge will appoint a Public Defender to represent you if a lawyer is necessary. A public defender is lawyer assigned by the State of Massachusetts that represents people facing criminal charges who do not have their own lawyers and cannot afford to hire a lawyer.

### **I've never been to court before. What can I expect?**

If you have never been to court before, you can review the website linked below. It contains information about where to go and what to expect when in the courtroom. There are also interpreters available at all courthouses.

Link: <http://www.mass.gov/yourfirstcourtappearance>

QR Code:



### **Important Tips**

- If you already have a lawyer, you can ask your lawyer to go with you to court to clear your warrant. If they cannot go with you, or you do not have a lawyer, as explained above, the judge may appoint a Public Defender to represent you.
- You may bring your cell phone into the courthouse, but it must be on silent.
- Make sure you have any important documents related to your warrant, or reason for missing your court date, with you. Write down any relevant phone numbers for people for your public defender to talk to if they need to gather more information about you (like employers, family, friends, colleagues, social workers, EA Family Shelter case manager, or other advocates).
- Some judges do not allow children in the courtroom. If you can, arrange child-care in advance and have a plan in case you cannot leave, or court runs late.
- When you leave the courthouse, ask the clerk to give you paperwork showing the warrant was removed. Sometimes, you may not be able to get this paperwork on the same day you are in court. You may need to go back a different day to the courthouse to get the paperwork.
  - You can also look up these records online using the link below.

- Link: <https://www.masscourts.org/eservices/search.page>

- QR Code:





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Information for Finding Courthouses	Information on Legal Assistance	Information on How to Find a Lawyer
Link: <a href="http://www.mass.gov/courtlocations">http://www.mass.gov/courtlocations</a> QR Code: 	Link: <a href="http://www.mass.gov/legalhelp">http://www.mass.gov/legalhelp</a> QR Code: 	Link: <a href="http://www.mass.gov/findalawyer">http://www.mass.gov/findalawyer</a> QR Code: 