



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Charles D. Baker, Governor ♦ Karyn E. Polito, Lt. Governor ♦ Chrystal Kornegay, Undersecretary

PUBLIC HOUSING NOTICE 2017-23

TO: Executive Directors of Local Housing Authorities

FROM: Amy Stitely, Associate Director, Division of Public Housing

DATE: October 6, 2017

SUBJECT: Housing Inquiries Due to Recent Hurricanes

As we are all too aware, starting on August 25th, hurricanes have deeply impacted people living in Texas and surrounding states, as well as parts of the Caribbean, Florida, and Puerto Rico. There have been five hurricanes in this very short period of time – starting with Hurricane Harvey which devastated parts of Texas, followed by Hurricane Irma which ravaged parts of the Caribbean and then hit Florida. Hurricane Jose did not hit land, but Hurricane Maria caused catastrophic damage to Puerto Rico right after Hurricane Irma and, lastly, Hurricane Lee, remained at sea.

Many families and individuals have family, friends, or roots here in Massachusetts. As conditions resulting from the hurricanes are addressed, many places are totally uninhabitable. In Puerto Rico, approximately 20,000 households have no electricity, and 50,000 households are without running water. Families or individuals coming to Massachusetts to unite with family or friends will be looking for a place to stay either temporarily or permanently. In all probability there are tenants in your state-aided public housing with family or friends in one of these affected communities.

Local housing authorities (LHAs) have been asking for guidance regarding guests and the housing of families or individuals that are either coming to be with family or friends or looking to relocate permanently to Massachusetts.

If guests are coming to stay in state-aided public housing temporarily, LHAs may choose to extend the 21-day guest restriction contained in the lease. If doing so, LHAs should meet with the tenant and the visitor(s) to identify who is staying in the unit and discuss length of stay. The LHA should then notify their DHCD Housing Management Specialist that the extensions have been granted.

Some families and individuals may want to permanently relocate to Massachusetts and apply for state-aided public housing. They will be eligible to receive Priority 1, Displaced by Natural Forces. We have received questions regarding the processing of applications from households that have been displaced. Many of these households will not have and will not be able to obtain all the documentation that is needed to determine eligibility. Attached is a suggested list of the types of documentation you may be able to

obtain to assist you in determining an applicant eligible for Priority 1, household and income eligible, and qualified for state-aided housing.

In the event that an existing tenant in state-aided housing requests to permanently add an additional member to their household (a parent or other relative, for example), LHAs may choose to temporarily relax the verification requirements in the same way as for new Priority 1 applicants. LHAs may also relax the appropriate unit size standards for households adding a new member, so long as occupancy of the apartment does not violate the square footage requirements of the State Sanitary Code.

We recognize that there is a large number of Massachusetts residents in need of housing as evidenced by the length of waiting lists at LHAs. It is always difficult to balance one need against another, but people affected by these hurricanes are coming from uninhabitable conditions, destroyed areas, and need help. Again, we encourage you to assist these families and individuals with extended stays and, if a household is interested in permanently relocating, please assist them in obtaining the Universal Standard Application and the Universal Emergency Application

Thank you for the support and assistance you are able to extend to these households through this difficult time of transition. If you have questions about this Notice, please contact your DHCD Housing Management Specialist or Christine.Devore@state.ma.us (617) 573-1242.

ATTACHMENT DHCD PHN 2017-23

Types of Suggested Documentation for Households Affected by Hurricane Harvey, Irma, Jose, Maria, and Lee

Any evacuee who contacts your LHA and wants to apply for housing:

1. Is eligible for Priority 1 – Displaced by Natural Forces, provided the LHA can make reasonable determinations regarding displacement. Applicants must complete the Universal Standard and Universal Emergency Applications.
2. Forms of documentation that may be accepted (not all required):
 - An airline ticket from the affected area to the City they flew to.
 - Driver’s license or any other government identification
 - Utility bill
 - Credit Report will provide information about address
 - FEMA identification card. Person may or may not have this. It will depend if they have gone through application process with FEMA. All evacuees should apply as it makes them eligible for various federal benefits.
 - Verification from the Red Cross or other disaster aid organization
3. Inform applicant that they will need to provide Criminal Record Information. Applicant must sign the following statement:

I understand that the Housing Authority will request information about any and all criminal records of the adult members of my household from the Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board, Sex Offender Registry Board, or out-of-state records agency, or may ask me or adult members of my household to provide such information.

4. Methods to obtain Verification of Income, Assets, Deduction, address, etc.
 - Credit Report. This will provide you with information about address and credit history.
 - Tenant Screening Report such as “The Info Center”
 - Internet search. Can research people through the internet, but be aware that some of the services charge a fee.
 - Driver’s license, state issued identification
 - School records
 - Utility bill, accounts may be accessible online
 - Credit card bill, accounts may be accessible online
 - Bank statement, accounts may be accessible online
5. Determination of Rents.
 - Determine based on as much information as can be obtained now. Household circumstances will change rapidly over the next few months. Advise household that once they begin to receive benefits, or are employed, receive insurance settlements, or can identify status of assets, etc. that they must come in for interim redetermination.