

# **Experiences: History of Homelessness & Housing Advocacy in Massachusetts**

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# BASIC FACTS ON HOMELESSNESS IN MASSACHUSETTS

- As of January 2020, Massachusetts had an estimated **17,975** experiencing homelessness on any given day, as reported by Continuums of Care to the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD).
  - The number of individuals experiencing homelessness has more than doubled since 1990.
  - Massachusetts has the **3rd highest rate** of family homelessness in the US.
- On any given night in Massachusetts, the approximately 3,000 shelter beds for individuals usually are full or beyond capacity (supplemented by cots & sleeping bags).
- Housing instability is more prevalent than homelessness, though less apparent.
- Increasing rates of homelessness contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS
- While there may not be 1 complete solution to homelessness coming in the near future, individuals & families can successfully rise up when this issue is tackled in a multifaceted manor - which simply means connecting all of the dots & continuing to provide ALL of the solutions that have been shown to work over the years. Communities & individuals can come together to help continue this work.

# URBAN PLANNING HISTORY OF BOSTON



- Family public housings in Boston were completed in two waves. Due to World War II, the housing projects came to a halt & resumed steadily from 1949 to 1954 – initially beginning in 1938. During this second wave, the focus for public housing shifted from accommodating specific families to the most needy among the poor - to clear the homeless & prevent the formation of slums.
- Many public housing properties quickly suffered due to the poor designs, shabby structures, inattentive supervisions, growing crimes, & rapid turnovers. In response to the rising problems of previous public housing projects, housing authorities & governmental jurisdictions mostly ceased further construction by the 1960s due to lack of funding & steady growth rate.
- Boston Housing Authority (BHA) became the first to stop development in family projects in 1954. Instead, BHA along with other agencies continued a few developments for single buildings predominantly to serve the elderly.
- Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts initiated the Brooke Amendment in 1969, which created a cap for housing authorities to acquire rents only at a certain percentage of tenants' income.
- During this era, tenant population in public housing witnessed a dramatically fast racial extreme of demography. By 1964, six major public housing developments in Boston comprised of eighty percent white. By 1970, seventy percent of those were POC.
- The most significant innovation during this era in regards to public housing was the result of **extensive community activism**.

# ISSUES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO HOMELESSNESS

- Experiencing trauma as a child
  - Inability to break generational homelessness
  - Getting kicked out/running away/toxic environment/abusive household
  - Aging out of the foster care system without adequate resources/support system in place
  - Inability to access adequate mental health resources/necessary medications
  - Drug abuse & addiction (both low & high functioning individuals)
- Housing insecurity & instability
- Wealth gaps/Poverty
  - Hardship Gap
  - Eligibility Gap
  - Coverage Gap
  - Low Wages
- Re-unemployment
  - Ex. THEFT
  - Three Strikes Law
- Gentrification



# MASSACHUSETTS HOUSING FIRST PROGRAMS

- **Technical Assistance Program (TAP)**

Technical Assistance Program of Victory Programs, Inc. TAP has worked to create & maintain a continuum of housing options for people infected with—& affected by—HIV since its creation in 1991 as the AIDS Housing Corporation (AHC). AHC became TAP when it merged with Victory Programs, Inc., in 2010. Today TAP is New England's leading provider of technical assistance to organizations, which sponsor AIDS housing programs.

**Website:** [https://tapintohope.org/program\\_group/housing/](https://tapintohope.org/program_group/housing/)

- **The Assisted Living Program (ALP)**

The Assisted Living Program (ALP) provides both affordable housing opportunities & supportive services for persons living with HIV/AIDS, throughout Massachusetts.

**Website:** <https://jri.org/services/health-and-housing/housing/assisted-living>

- **Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance (MHSA)**

Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance MHSA is a nonprofit, public policy advocacy organization that has evolved to include nearly 100 community-based member agencies throughout Massachusetts.

**Website:** <https://mhsa.net/>

- **Commonwealth Land Trust (CLT)**

Commonwealth Land Trust (CLT) provides affordable housing and supportive services to the most vulnerable individuals & families in Massachusetts to prevent homelessness.

**Website:** <https://commonwealthlandtrust.org/about-us/>

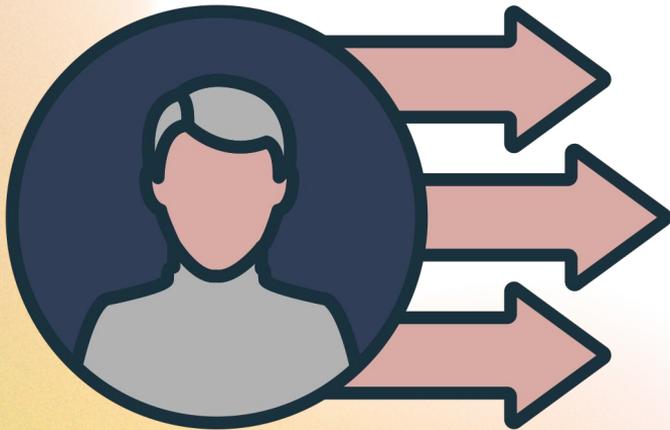
- **Solutions At Work**

Solutions At Work is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to breaking the cycle of poverty and homelessness by providing individuals & families with resources & opportunities. Solutions at Work manages a homeless shelter for men & women on Green Street in Cambridge. Solutions also runs an evening meals program for unhoused individuals 5 days a week in Central Square.

**Website:** <https://solutionsatwork.org/>

# PROMISING APPROACHES

According to a New England Journal of Public Policy, written in 2012, a study of a model tested in western Massachusetts suggests that implementing preventive counseling programs & redirecting the community's resources from crisis management to education & economic development leads to better results in maintaining housing stability.



- Early Warning System
- First Stop Initiative
- Programs/agencies

Boston Housing Access Collaborative

Victory Programs, INC

Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP)

- Providing cash assistance during AND after homelessness
- State support

# AGENCIES DEDICATED TO ENDING HOMELESSNESS

BOSTON BASED:

- [Action for Boston Community Development](#)
- [AIDS Action](#)
- [A Home 4 Everyone, Inc](#)
- [Bridge Over Troubled Waters](#)
- [Commonwealth Land Trust](#)
- [FamilyAid Boston](#)
- [Heading Home](#)
- [Hearth, Inc.](#) (Elderly homeless housing assistance)
- [HomeStart](#)



- [Pine Street Inn](#)
- [Project Bread](#)
- [Life Bridge North Shore](#)
- [New England Center & Home for Veterans](#)
- [Metro Housing Boston](#)
- [Project Hope](#) (low income women with children)
- [Project Place](#)
- [Rosie's Place](#) (for identifying women)
- [Somerville Homeless Coalition](#)



VARIOUS SERVICES PROVIDED (Mental health/sobriety counseling, housing assistance/placement, food security, job training/assistance, case management, child care, etc):

- [AIDS Action \(Fenway Community Health Center\)](#)
- [Action for Boston Community Development](#)
- [Boston Alcohol & Substance Abuse Programs \(Boston ASAP\)](#)
- [Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program](#)
- [Bay Cove Human Services](#)
- [Children's Services of Roxbury](#)



# SOLUTIONS THAT WORK

- **Increasing the supply of housing that is affordable to families & marginalized communities with low incomes.**
- Increasing the state's minimum wage & promote all workers' access to paid sick leave
- **Subsidized housing (which reduces housing instability)**
- Housing vouchers help improve housing mobility, education & training
- **Replicate, expand, & sustain promising models of prevention that show signs of stabilization**
- Invest in long-term evaluations of program innovations by investigating what is happening with families who are diverted from shelter and receiving time-limited cash assistance.
- **Facilitate a cross-sector planning process and peer learning among agencies & initiatives already taking action.**



# REFERENCED SOURCES

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