



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Emergency Assistance (EA) Commission

Meeting 2
August 19, 2024





Agenda

- **[5 min] Introduction, Review & Approval of Last Meeting Notes, Preview of Upcoming Sessions**
- **[15 min] Review of Temporary Respite Center Model**
- **[15 min] Overview of Diversions and Exits Support**
- **[15 min] Long-Term System Planning**
- **[45 min] Discussion of Long-Term System Planning**



Summary of Kick-Off and Upcoming Agenda

Questions & Topics to Address – Summary from Kick-Off

- How do we make the EA program more **efficient and sustainable**?
- Where are families exiting to, and how do we better provide **exit opportunities**?
- How do we move EA towards **fiscal & operational sustainability**?
- How are we developing **regional strategies** to address homelessness?
- How can we best match **service delivery** to the needs of different populations?
- How are we facilitating **work authorization** for new arrival families and connecting them with employment opportunities?
- How can we ensure we integrate learnings from this crisis into a **future EA plan** for scaling the system up/down?

Month	Session Topic
August	Temporary Respite Center Model Updates on Diversion & Exits
September	Work authorization & employment
October	RA and CBO engagement; Provider regional model
November	Wrap Up & Next Steps



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Focus for today

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Temporary Respite Center Model



Current State of Emergency Assistance (EA) Family Shelter System

Since January 2023, the EA shelter program has doubled and demand outpaces our supply of available shelter beds. In parallel, we face rising operational and fiscal constraints.

The Administration's goal is to ensure shelter for families is **temporary, supportive, and non-recurring**.

Operational Constraints

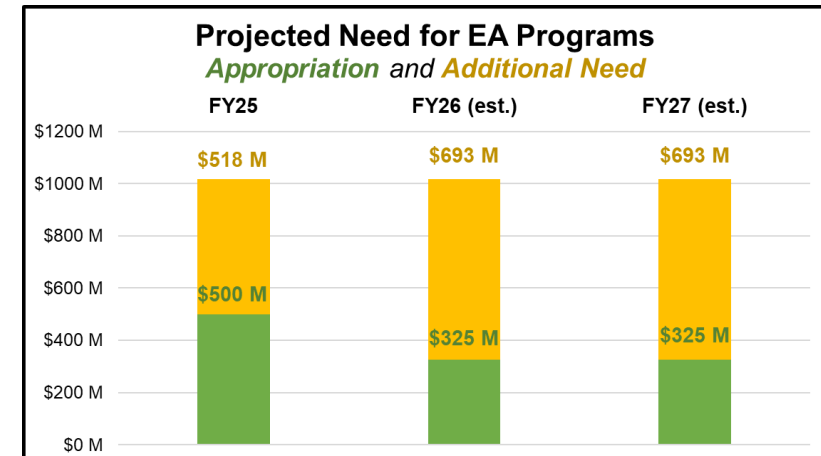
Current Monthly Demand
~400 families

Current Monthly Exits
~330 families

Current Waitlist
~750 families

- Current demand outpaces our ability to sustainably expand the system, including Temporary Respite Centers

Fiscal Constraints



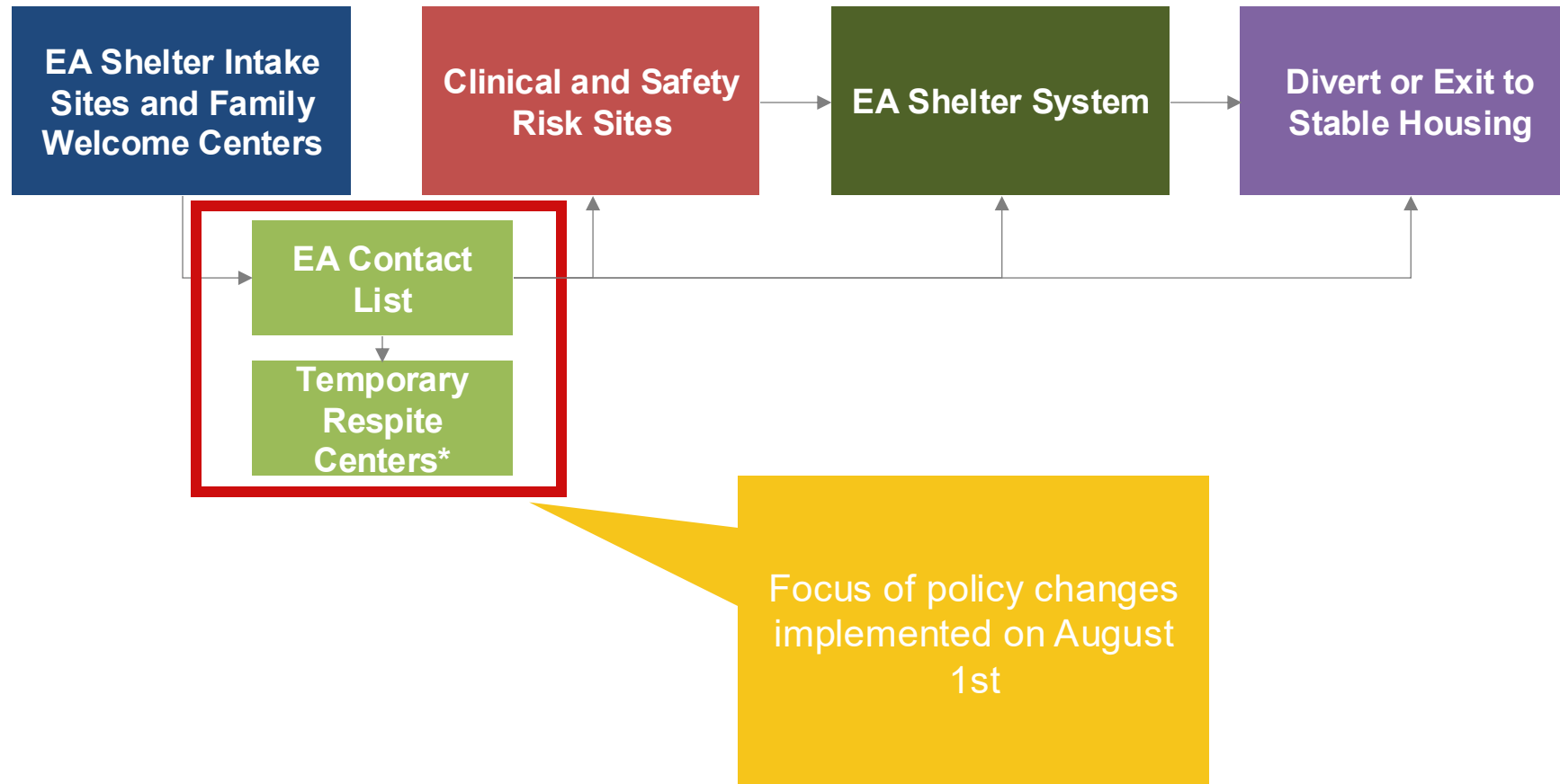
- Legislature has appropriated \$1.4 billion for the EA program since Nov. 2022, but one-time funding sources (Transitional Escrow Fund, “TEF”) are running out
- EA program is projected to cost over \$1 billion in FY25.
- Continued spending at current caseload, level of services, and continued GAA appropriation without TEF leads to large out-year General Fund needs



Types of Shelter in EA Ecosystem

Current EA ecosystem includes three types of sites with different time limits for families.

EA Family Journey





Contact List and Temporary Respite Center Updates

As a result of continued pressure on our system – fiscally and operationally – the Administration implemented changes to the contact list prioritization criteria and a new Temporary Respite Center model in place of the previous overflow site model.

Contact List Prioritization Changes:

- **Continue:** Prioritize families who have significant medical needs, are at risk of domestic violence, or are homeless because of fire, flood, or other disasters
- **New:** Families rendered homeless due to no-fault evictions, who have at least one family member who is a veteran, or who are aging out of a DCF Young Parent Living Program will now also be prioritized
- Families who are prioritized will continue to have access to Clinical & Safety Risk Assessment (CSR) sites prior to placement into EA

Temporary Respite Center Time Limits:

- Families with lower priority for EA placement (P4) will be eligible to stay at a “Temporary Respite Center” (formerly overflow site)
- Families who choose this option will:
 - Receive a stay of 5 full business days, and
 - Forego placement on the EA contact list (formerly waitlist) for six months
- All families eligible for EA will continue to remain eligible for diversion services, including reticketing



Resources For Families

We have taken a family-centric approach that supports families in building a plan and identifying alternative housing.

Intensive Case Management

ROPES Model Overview

What is ROPES?
A case management and assessment method that stands for:

Resources → Options → Possibilities → Exceptions → Solutions

Case Managers' Role in Implementing ROPES

ROPES Assessment / conversation should be completed in the first case management meeting with families upon entry to a Temporary Respite Center (TRC).

Within this model, your role will be to accompany and encourage the family as they create a safe plan to exit the TRC on Day 6:

1. Help family identify and connect with existing resources in and out of state
2. Confirm with families what assistance they need in utilizing these resources.
3. Help family identify options for rapid connection to new resources (e.g. re-ticketing, family & friends, and resources at exit online ESOL) to support them
4. Strategize and create task lists

Exit/Safety Checklist

Safety

- I have a list of people / places who can help me in an emergency.
- I have a plan for safe sleeping.
- I have made a list of safe places to stay.
- I have a list of places I can go to cool down if it is very hot, warm up if it is very warm, or get water if I need it.
- I know where I can shower, use the bathroom, and attend to my basic needs.

Benefits and Medical

- I know what cash assistance and health insurance I can sign up for and have the phone numbers / addresses for DTA offices.
- I have a list of my medications and understand how to get medication at a Health Safety Net Pharmacy or other pharmacies once I have enrolled in MassHealth.
- I have a list of Community Health Centers and Emergency Departments near me. I know how to get medical help in an emergency and know when I should go to an emergency department or another place.

Housing

- I know how I can get re-ticketed or get help with applying for programs to help me pay rent when I leave the TRC like HomeBASE and other diversion supports.

Food and Nutrition

- I have a list of food banks/pantries.
- I know how to sign up for SNAP and WIC and have the phone numbers and addresses for offices.
- I know how to use my SNAP and cash benefits and where to go shopping.

Belongings

- I have basic products to make sure me and my family are clean (feminine products, diapers), and I know where to access these products when I leave the TRC including purchasing them with my cash benefits.
- All of my important papers and lists of people who to contact in an emergency in a waterproof folder.

Legal

- I understand my rights and legal status and know where to get help with my work authorization.
- I understand how to sign up my child for school and where to go / who to call to enroll them.

Family Flyer with Contact List and Resources Information

Emergency Assistance (EA) Family Shelter Options

For EA eligible families who do not meet priority criteria
The Massachusetts Emergency Assistance (EA) Family Shelter system is at capacity and does not have enough space to shelter every family. There may be resources available to you to help you on your next steps.

OPTION 1: Temporary Respite Center (TRC)

Family eligible for EA Family Shelter and does not meet priority criteria

Family chooses to stay at TRC for up to 3 days. Family will not be on the EA Family Shelter Contact List for the next 6 months

Family works with case managers to find safe housing so they do not need EA Family Shelter. Family uses diversion tools to help move to safe housing

Family finds a place to stay while waiting for an EA Shelter List

Family may have to wait several months for an EA Shelter List

Family finds their own home and exits EA Family Shelter

OPTION 2: EA Family Shelter Contact List (previously called the waitlist)

Family eligible for EA Family Shelter and does not meet priority criteria

Family is immediately placed on EA Family Shelter Contact List

Family finds own place to stay while waiting for an EA Shelter List

Family may have to wait several months for an EA Shelter List

Family finds their own home and exits EA Family Shelter

Resources available to BOTH OPTIONS

- no-ticketing
- HomeBASE

Resources for Both Options who do not meet priority criteria

How can I get access to HomeBASE?

If you are currently at one of the state's Temporary Respite Centers, you can ask staff there to help you. You can also talk to your diversion provider. Or you can talk to staff at:

- Logan Square Terminal 6
- Quincy Family Shelter Center
- Case Five Arts Building at 510 to 515 Broadway Ave, Quincy, MA 02269
- M 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
- M 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

What happens when a shelter space becomes available for my family?

If you are on the EA Family Shelter Contact List space becomes available for you, these are the next steps:

- The state will call, email and text you that shelter is available for you.** (Please make sure you have your cell phone number and email address.)
- To accept your space in shelter, you have until 12pm the NEXT business day to respond.** For example, you get a call, email, and text at 11am on Monday. To get placed, you must call, email, or text back for Tuesday at 12pm.
- If you do not respond by 12pm the next business day, the state will go to the next person on the Contact List.**
- You will NOT be removed from the Contact List or have your spot in line for not responding in the first time.** However, you will be terminated from the program if you are offered a shelter spot three times and do not respond by 12pm the next day each time. You can reapply immediately.
- Getting to the shelter:** Most families will need to arrive at the shelter with their things by 5pm. You can bring large bags per person. Each bag can be about the size of a 30 gallon trash bag.
- If you need help getting to shelter, our staff will help you get a ride. You must be ready to be picked up as soon as possible after the ride has been confirmed.**

EA Shelter Contact List Process and FAQs

How can I get access to HomeBASE? How can I find a place to stay?

HomeBASE and other diversion supports can assist you in a housing search and in accepting HomeBASE.

A diversion provider is an organization that supports member participants as they find housing. Diversion providers help you find your own housing instead of going to emergency shelter. Your diversion provider can help you connect with other resources such as DTA, HomeBASE and job training programs.

If you are currently at one of the state's Temporary Respite Centers, you can ask the staff there to help connect you with your diversion provider.

Call your diversion provider or ask the staff there to help connect you with your diversion provider.

HomeBASE is a program you can use to help pay for rent when you leave the TRC on Day 6.

HomeBASE is a program you can use to help pay for rent when you leave the TRC on Day 6.

Website and FAQs: mass.gov/EAContactList

Mass.gov

Health & Social Services > Emergency Housing Assistance > Apply for Emergency Assistance (EA) Family Shelter

OFFERED BY: Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities

What's next after becoming EA eligible: the Contact List and more

This page explains what the Emergency Assistance (EA) Family Shelter Contact List is, how it works and what to do after you are found EA eligible.

The state is not able to expand shelter capacity beyond 7,500 shelter units. The family shelter system does not have enough space or funding to shelter every eligible family. After you are determined EA eligible, your family will have options for what to do next. Your options will depend on your family's priority number. Priority will be based on certain medical needs, personal safety risks, and other criteria.

Options for families will include joining the Emergency Assistance (EA) Family Shelter Contact List. Here you can learn more about:

- Your options after you are determined EA Eligible
- How the EA Family Shelter Contact List works
- How the state will contact you if a spot is available

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- What has changed with the EA Family Shelter Contact List (formerly the waitlist)?
- What is the EA Family Shelter Contact List?
- Important actions after you have been found eligible for EA
- What determines the order of the Contact List?
- What's next after my family is found eligible for EA Family Shelter?
- How long will I need to wait for shelter if I am on the Contact List?
- Once I'm on the Contact List, how will I know if a unit becomes available?
- How will I get to the shelter?



TRC Family Data

Families affected by TRC policy have begun exiting to alternative locations. TRC providers are providing intensive case management to families at TRC sites and supporting them in identifying their next step and developing an exit plan.

198

families have received a notice with an exit date

34

families have exited TRCs since 8/1



Where families went:

- Placements into EA shelter*
- Transferred to a CSR site
- Move in with friends and family
- Moved out of state / reticketed
- Voluntarily left the site

110

families have received administrative extensions since 8/1



- Some of these families have now exited
- Extensions granted for imminent access to housing, transportation delays, health-related events, and engagement in case management

**Families were on EA contact list prior to 8/1 and were not subject to 6-month exclusion from EA contact list*



Support for Diversion and Exits



Diversion and Exits Supports

Across our system, we provide robust support for families in accessing diversion and supportive services as they plan their next steps.



Diversion resources

including access to HomeBASE and other diversion programs and reticketing to other states



Services including basic needs, public benefits enrollment assistance, legal assistance, & health screenings



Intensive case management focused on connecting family to their support networks and stable housing



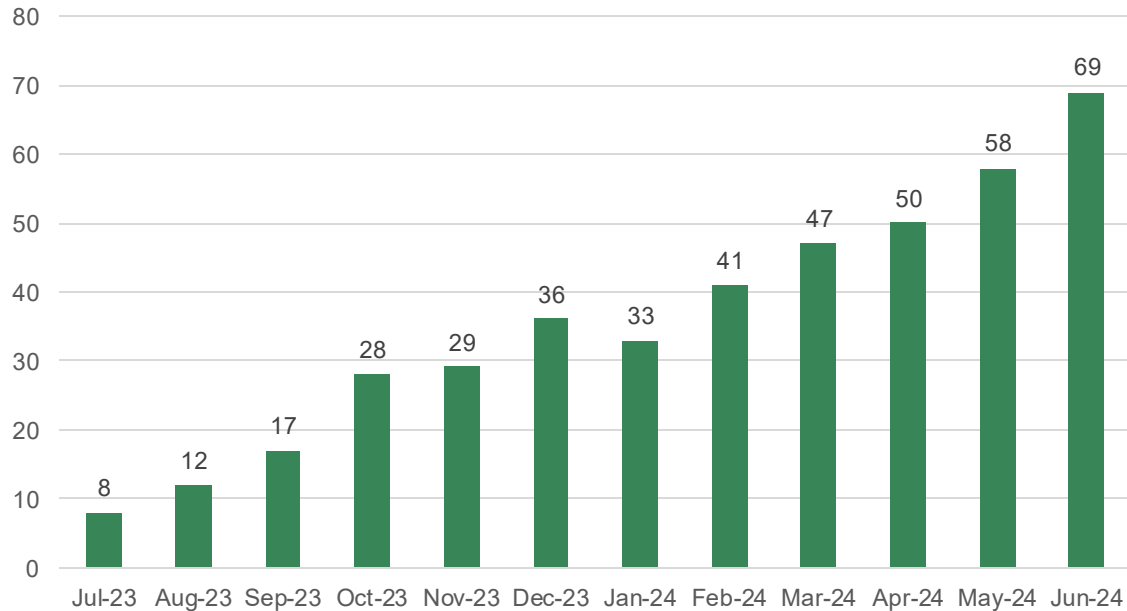
Employment support including applying for work authorization permits, if needed, and connecting to training programs and job opportunities



Diversion and Exits Support

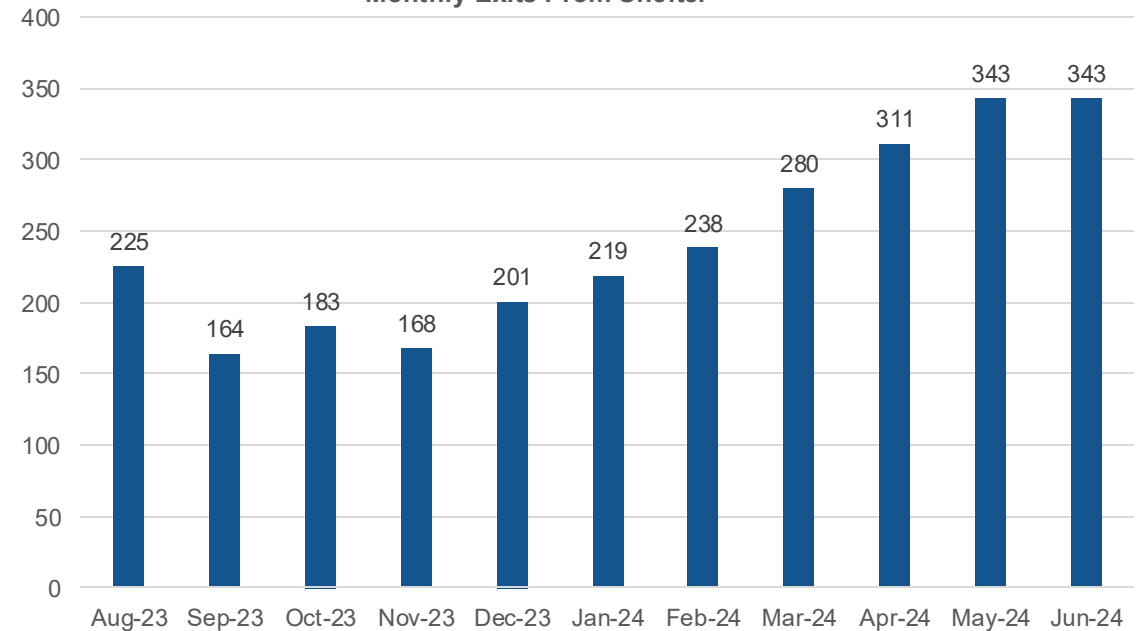
Diversions, shelter exits, and employment support are critical pieces of a sustainable EA system, and the administration is directing support to increasing these tools for families to access stable housing.

HomeBASE Enrollments through Diversion



- 428 Families have been able to access stable housing by enrolling in HomeBASE through diversion services over the last 12 months.

Monthly Exits From Shelter



- There has been an increase in shelter exits over the last months as well, with a majority exiting either with a housing voucher and/or through EOHLC's HomeBASE program into stable housing.



Emergency Assistance Shelter Exit Efforts

We have a few primary tools to help families exit shelter, and we know these tools have been an important part of the increase in exit numbers over the last year.

Tools for Shelter Exit

HomeBASE

- \$45,000 for up to three years for rental stipends, costs of securing a unit, moving costs, furniture, utilities.
- Stabilization assistance from case workers.

Housing Subsidy

- An ongoing voucher that provides rental assistance for families.
- Families pay 30% of their income towards rent.

Flexible Funds

- Providers can deploy these funds quickly to help a family secure or maintain stable housing.
- Often used for unit holding payments, first and last month's rent, moving costs, stabilization.



69% of exits in 2024 have utilized HomeBASE

44% of exits in 2024 have utilized housing subsidies

27% of exits in 2024 have utilized flexible funds

*Some families use multiple tools during exit, so these percentages are not mutually exclusive.

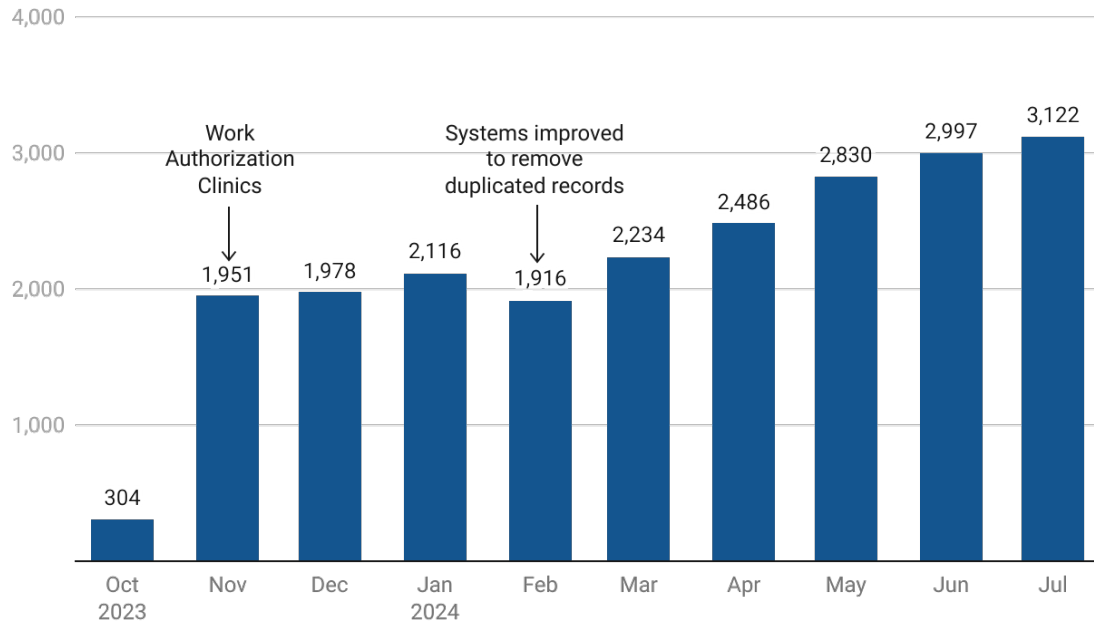


Diversion and Exits Support: Employment Data

We are approaching 3,400 work authorization approvals for new arrival families in Massachusetts and working with employers and to provide employment and training opportunities.

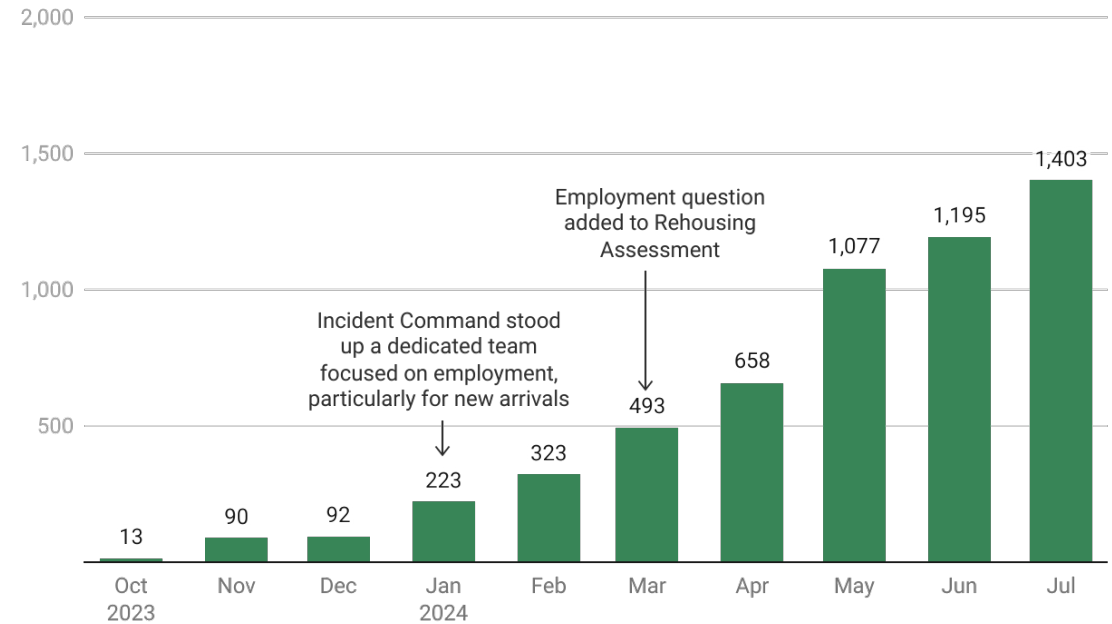
Work Authorization for Migrant EA Shelter Residents

EA residents reporting that they have a work permit by month, excluding US Citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents



Employment for EA Shelter Residents

EA residents reporting employment by month, including migrants, US Citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents



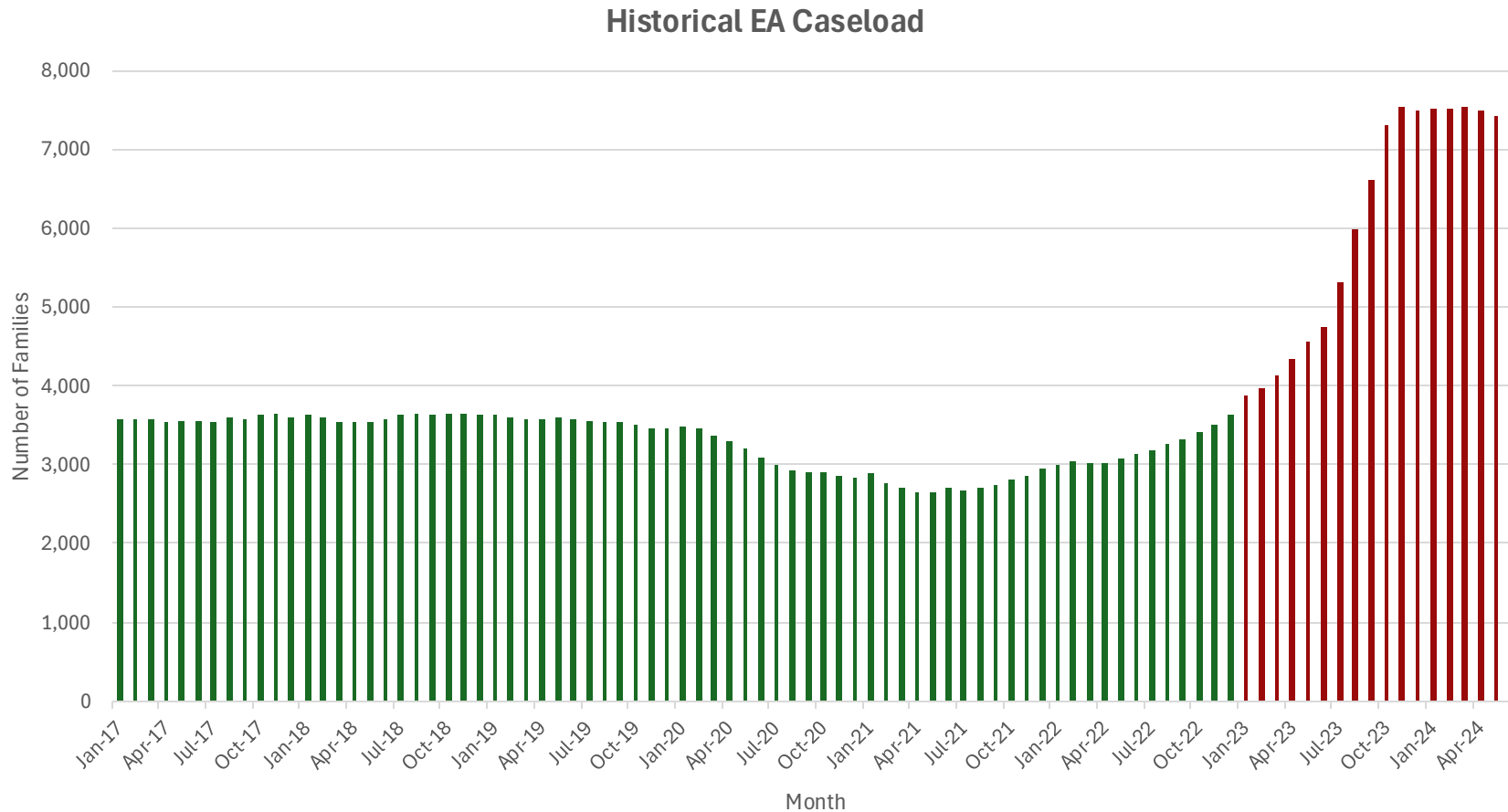


Long-Term System Planning



EA Program History

The EA program historically has served ~4,000 families with average lengths of stays of over 1 year. The program has faced challenges with flexing to meet variable needs amid a tight housing market.



Average Length of Stay

Calendar Year	Average Length of Stay
2021	455 days
2022	431 days
2023	384 days
2024	365 days

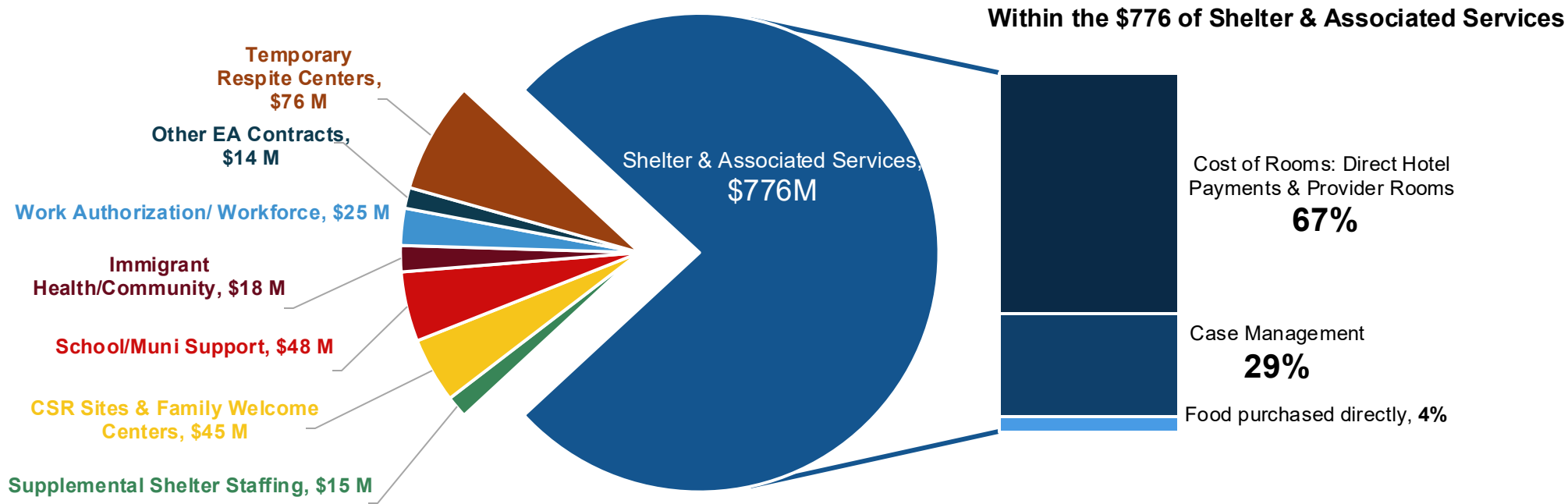
EA Budget

Fiscal Year	Appropriation (GAA+Supps)
FY2021	\$193.0M
FY2022	\$218.4M
FY2023	\$299.0M
FY2024	\$955.0M



State of Current System

We have expanded the EA Family Shelter system in response to rising demand over the last year and half, but demand has continued to grow. The EA system now requires over \$1B to operate annually.



76% of \$1B EA cost is spent on operating EA shelter.

Without further appropriations, FY25 EA funding is expected to runout on approximately January 1, 2025.



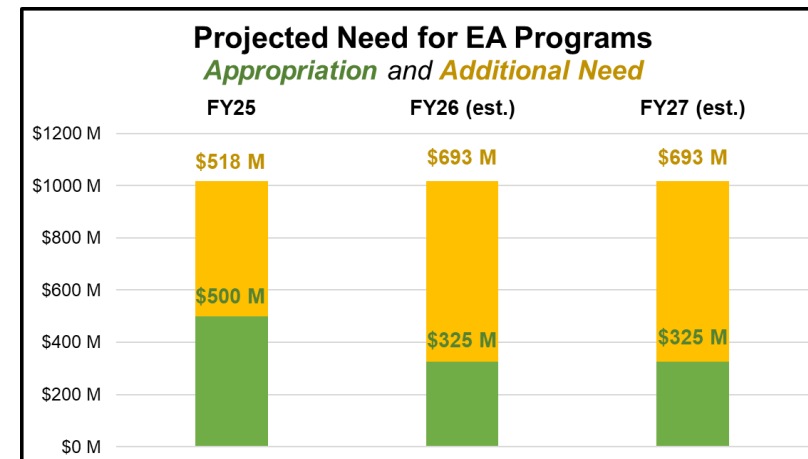
State of Current System

We have made hard policy decisions to address these constraints while providing the best support possible to families in our system.

- November 2023: Waitlist and prioritization due to reaching shelter capacity
- March 2024: Engagement requirements in overflow sites
- July 2024: EA Length of Stay Policy Implemented
- July 2024: End of overnight stays at Logan
- August 2024: Prioritization and TRC Policy Changes

Even with these changes, demand remains high, and we continue to face fiscal and operational constraints.

Current Monthly Demand ~400 families
Current Monthly Exits ~330 families
Current Waitlist ~750 families





Long-Term System Planning - Discussion

Given fiscal and operational constraints, there are two challenges we face.

Short-term: Current Deficiencies and Caseload

We have to continue to make changes to manage the current fiscal year and out-year deficiencies in the face of unsustainable demand.

Long-term: Future of EA Shelter System

We know the system needs reform and need to begin planning for how to make the program sustainable in the long-run.



Focus for EA Commission report



EA Family Shelter System Vision

As we begin planning for the Commission report, we want to align on a mission for what we'd like the EA program to be in the future. Words we currently use to describe the mission of the EA program include **rare, brief, and non-recurring**.

What other key principles should we consider as we envision the future of EA?

Rare

- How do we ensure all stakeholders, including families, share expectations for shelter being rare and for emergency situations?
- How do we improve homelessness prevention and shelter diversion tools so families can avoid entering shelter?

Brief

- How do we meet the needs of different family populations?
- How do we provide intensive case management to support families in rapidly rehousing?
- Should we maintain a Length of Stay policy for the EA program after the crisis?

Non-Recurring

- How do we support families on a path to stable housing as they leave shelter?