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| EA/DV Integration Subcommittee |
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# Memorandum

To: Jane Banks, DHCD Judy Benitez Clancy, DPH

Ita Mullarkey, DHCD Joshua Lubbers, DPH

Amy Mullen, DHCD Christopher Newman, DPH

From: Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness Subcommittee on EA

and DV Integration

Date: November 16, 2017

Re: Rollout of HomeBASE access protocol for families in DPH-funded DV shelter

As members of the Subcommittee on EA/DV Integration – a small working group comprised of both EA and DV shelter providers, as well as representatives of the two western Mass Continua of Care, the Department of Transitional Assistance Domestic Violence Unit, and the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness – we are tasked with identifying regional goals and developing a workplan to: (1) better assist DV families with accessing EA resources, (2) facilitate improved DV services for families in the EA system, and (3) improve data collection, management, and utilization across both systems. In the course of our work, we have identified that the FY2017 rollout of HomeBASE access for families in DV shelter has posed significant mission and compliance challenges for DPH-funded providers. While system flexibility is crucial to assure the best “right fit” for services for a family seeking shelter, the required *quid pro quo*,where DV shelters provide space for an EA family in exchange for a DPH-funded family’s access to HomeBASE, can in some circumstances conflict with DV providers’ mission and mandated criteria to provide shelter to families in (1) imminent risk from (2) a threat of domestic violence (3) with no safe place to stay. Additionally, the on-the-ground implementation of the new protocols have resulted in confusion across the board with respect to permissible and impermissible reasons to decline a referred EA family, appointed persons tasked with each step of the process, and other technical questions. As a result, the Sub-Committee on EA/DV Integration proposes the following recommendations to clarify the HomeBASE access protocol, to facilitate contractual compliance for DPH-funded agencies, and to support the goal of system integration:

* There are at least four potential referral categories of EA families who have experienced domestic violence:
  1. Families at the point of entry, not yet sheltered, assessed to be in imminent danger of DV or sexual assault;
  2. Families already in EA shelter who have experienced DV or sexual assault while in shelter who are no longer safe in their current placement;
  3. Families at point of entry assessed to have a history of DV but who are not in imminent danger;
  4. Families in EA shelter who were assessed at point of entry to be in imminent danger but who are now safely sheltered and have experienced no further violence.

The first two classes of families are appropriate referrals to DV shelter under DPH-funded providers’ existing contracts; the latter two are not.

* We recognize that it poses a significant operational burden to request that DHCD’s Placement Unit integrate new placement criteria into their existing systems, particularly to benefit the relatively small number of families in DV shelter who are accessing HomeBASE through the protocol. Accordingly, we would recommend that DV agencies be permitted to directly contact the following referral sources to identify appropriate families for the transfer:
  1. Local EA shelter leadership (for category 2 families)[[1]](#footnote-1)
  2. DTA Domestic Violence Unit staff (for families in both categories 1 and 2)[[2]](#footnote-2)
  3. Leadership at the local DHCD front door office (for category 1 families)[[3]](#footnote-3)
* Once a DV family accesses HomeBASE, the DV provider should be responsible for working with the designated contacts for each referral source to identify the most appropriate family for transfer.
* The DV provider would then assess the family on arrival to assure that the family meets the three criteria for DPH placement. Appropriate bases for denial, per the required criteria, would include: the family is not in imminent danger; the family does not suffer domestic violence; or the family has another safe housing or shelter alternative.
* The family would also retain the right to request transfer back into the EA system.
* The DV provider would be responsible for communicating with DHCD’s Placement Unit in the event that it is determined that a family should transfer back into EA within thirty days of their arrival at DV shelter.

We appreciate your consideration of this proposal for further discussion and potential implementation. We look forward to furthering our shared goals of making HomeBASE the resource it was intended to be for eligible families in the DV system.

1. For Hampden County, for example, this would be Holly Florek at CHD, as well as her analogue at Wayfinders and NEFWC. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Jane Lindfors in Springfield and Miriam Chavez in Holyoke. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Bonnie Caldwell and Alvina Brevard at the 310 State Street office. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)