



MHP resources for Massachusetts tenants during the COVID-19 pandemic

In this time of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic and a statewide emergency in Massachusetts, MHP has suggestions for resources that tenants can use if they are concerned about being able to pay their rent or stay in their rental units. We also are providing some resources for other issues that may arise, such as how to apply for Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) benefits and unemployment.

Help with Housing Issues

General Information: The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has a resource page with information about local housing authorities, homeless shelters, and more: <https://hedfuel.azurewebsites.net/> Type the name of your community into the box at the top of the page, and you will be directed to local housing information for where you live.

If your family is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, there is a special program called RAFT that may be able to help you. You can find more information here: <https://mahomeless.org/residential-assistance-for-families-in-transition-raft-homelessness-prevention-program/>

If your family needs shelter: Call DHCD at 1-866-584-0653 for referrals.

If you have a federal or state rental voucher: Notify the housing authority that issued your voucher right away if your income has decreased or there has been another change in circumstances that will keep you from paying your share of the rent. They will be able to help you communicate with the landlord, too.

If you can't pay your rent due to COVID-19, send a letter or email to your landlord within 30 days of the due date explaining that you cannot make the payment due to the financial impact of COVID-19. This ensures that your landlord cannot charge you late fees or make a negative report to a credit agency due to your inability to pay your rent during the state of emergency. For more information, go to this link: <https://www.masslegalhelp.org/covid-19/housing>.

Eviction

Almost all evictions in Massachusetts are temporarily banned until August 18, 2020 or 45 days after the end of the COVID-19 state of emergency, whichever comes first.

Even though evictions are temporarily banned, your rent is still due on the usual dates. After the emergency you can still be evicted if your rent is unpaid and you have not made payment arrangements with your landlord. If you are unable to pay your rent, seek assistance now and reach out early to your landlord to discuss potential payment plans or accommodations. Here is an article with some helpful suggestions about dealing with your landlord: <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/04/03/what-to-do-if-you-cant-pay-rent-because-of-the-coronavirus-pandemic.html>

If you are dealing with an eviction that was already in progress, here is a good source of legal information about when cases can proceed in housing court: <https://www.masslegalhelp.org/covid-19/eviction-court-updates>. They also have information about how to find a lawyer if you think you need one.

If your landlord is threatening to lock you out or evict you, or is turning off the utilities in your unit, you can find information here <https://www.masslegalhelp.org/health-mental-health/covid-19-illegal-eviction> about your rights and how to get legal help.

You might also contact City Life/Vida Urbana, which is a tenant advocacy group. Ask them if they can help you or give you a referral. English (617) 934-5006 Español (617) 397-3773.

Domestic Violence (Abuse)

If you think you may need a lawyer or need other legal information, such as how to get an emergency restraining order because you are experiencing domestic violence (abuse), there is information at the Mass Legal Help website: <https://www.masslegalhelp.org/domestic-violence/covid-19/209A-258E>

You can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 800-799-7233. If you cannot safely make a phone call, you can go to this website: <https://www.thehotline.org/> or you can text LOVEIS to 22522.

Food

If you are having trouble feeding yourself or your family, you can apply for SNAP benefits (food stamps) online or over the phone. Here is more information about what to do: <https://www.masslegalhelp.org/health-mental-health/covid19-snap>

To find food pantry programs in your area, call Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline: 800-645-8333.

You can also go to the Greater Boston Food Bank website, where you can type in the name of your town/city or your zip code to obtain information about food help where you live: <https://www.gbfb.org/need-food/>

If you have school-age children, the public schools in many cities and towns are providing food for children. You can use this resource even if your children were not eligible for free or reduced lunch during the regular school year. Check the website of

your school district for more information. Here is a list of schools in Boston that are providing food: <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Page/8098>

If you are pregnant or have children under the age of 5, you may be eligible for WIC, a supplemental food program for women, infants and children. Go [online](#) to find out where you can apply, or call Massachusetts WIC toll-free at 1-800-942-1007.

Cash Assistance

To apply for programs such as TAFDC or EAEDC cash assistance (welfare benefits): <https://www.masslegalhelp.org/health-mental-health/covid-19-dta>

Health Insurance

You can apply for MassHealth benefits or for private health insurance through the Connector: <https://www.masslegalhelp.org/health-mental-health/covid-19-health>

Unemployment Insurance

You can apply for unemployment benefits online: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/departement-of-unemployment-assistance>

Bills

If you need information about what to do if you cannot pay your car note, credit card or other bills: <https://www.masslegalhelp.org/health-mental-health/covid-19-consumer/bills>

Utilities

Utility companies in Massachusetts may not shut off your gas, electric or water service during the #COVID-19 pandemic emergency: <https://www.masslegalhelp.org/covid-19-utilities>

Other Resources

MassLegalHelp.org has information about housing, your legal rights, how to apply for benefits and more in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, Kreyol and Portuguese: <https://www.masslegalhelp.org/>

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS AND HOW TO AVOID SPREADING THE DISEASE: Basic information about the coronavirus pandemic can be found in many languages here: <https://www.respondcrisistranslation.org/en/covid19>