

Family Services Meeting Minutes - July 14, 2026

In attendance: Brenda Liz Andino, Alianza, Tana Bloom, FCRHRA, Annie Connor, Community Legal Aid, Mayra de Jesus, Shriners, Vilma Duran, Catholic Charities, Stefany Garcia, Holyoke Public Schools, Darcy Gauthier, BHN, Stephen Huntley, Valley Opportunity Council, Melissa Marlowe, DPH FOR Families, Christy O'Brien, CHD, Lizzy Ortiz, Town of Ludlow, Xiomara Sanabria, VOC, Johanna Santiago, Alianza, Pamela Schwartz, WMNEH, Sahira Torres-Vazquez, Springfield Public Schools, Rachel Trant, Janette Vigo, Way Finders, Amanda Watson, FCRHRA

Family shelter reprocurement

We reviewed HLC decision making in the context of the EA shelter reprocurement:

- the EA system will max out at 2,600 beds - 2,200 as bridge shelter track units (typical shelter), 300 bridge shelter flex sites to be utilized if needed and 100 priority support site units for particular emergency situations that qualify a family to temporarily utilize preemptive eligibility (Way Finders will offer one site for this).
- Western MA has been allocated roughly 12% of EA shelter beds, approximately 200 units across the region
- The new procurement contract will begin on 11/1 (there was a 4 month extension of FY26 contracts).
- CHD's contract will not be renewed - transitioning families from shelter now and their roughly 300 families receiving stabilization services will be transferred to other providers (still unclear where). Remaining EA shelter providers in western MA will be Way Finders, Valley Opportunity Council and ServiceNet.
- Currently pending in the FY26 supplemental budget is a change from a 6 month length of stay to 9 months; also pending is a change in income eligibility from 115% to 120% of poverty level

FY27 Budget Updates:

The Governor signed the FY27 budget into law last week without any vetoes. CHAPA, a statewide housing organization and partner, offers its [analysis](#) for a big picture view. We reviewed the following:

- Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCEC) suffered a significant cut despite tremendous demand at their front doors across the region (roughly 900 RAFT applications each week in Hampden/Hampshire Counties). [SEE NEW HOURS FOR WAYFINDERS HCEC OFFICES](#) in Springfield, Holyoke and Northampton
- MRVP - \$25m increase - but that only accounts for the increased cost of vouchers and project based vouchers that have already been committed, i.e., no new vouchers
- Access to Counsel - increased by \$500K to \$3 million - this is a good thing! But it was noted that we need data to understand the benefit to western MA.
- Individual emergency winter shelter: that line item was not funded, which means shelters are dependent again on the 11th hour scramble for more funds to support emergency winter shelter - this is unfortunate!

Legislative Updates

- Rent Control: the MA Supreme Judicial Court ruled that the ballot initiative violated the state Constitution due to a religious exemption (religious institutions' housing would not fall under the rent control law) and threw the question off the ballot. This decision resulted in the end of negotiations between the ballot question advocates and the real estate lobby (a compromise was close to being presented to the Legislature). Now there is still pressure on the Legislature to pass the pending local option bill, but the formal sessions ends July 31 so the odds are slim for action.
- The Economic Development bill, which has passed the House and is now moving to the Senate, includes two Network priorities: Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act and Yes in God's Backyard (religious institutions' would be given the authority to develop new housing on their land as a matter of right). We will continue to push for these to make it to the finish line.
- The Transfer Fee for Affordable Housing is stuck in committees - will not move forward this session - will be refiled next session (starts in January).
- Pressure for action continues on the Foreclosure Mediation Bill and MA ID bill (creating easier access to MA IDs for people experiencing homelessness)

Good news:

CSO is celebrating the opening of two new permanent supportive housing developments, one in Springfield, one in Greenfield, each with 36 units. Also, revitalized shelter and resource centers. Everyone is welcome!

Greenfield, 60 Wells Street - July 29, 11:30 am - 1 pm - [see the flyer here](#)

Springfield, 755 Worthington Street - July 31, 1:30 - 3 pm, [see the flyer here](#)

Next meeting: Tuesday, September 8, 11 am