



Entry Form 2018 Annual Awards for Program Excellence

Entry Deadline: Friday, June 15, 2018, Midnight ET

Each entry must include a completed entry form. Please complete a form for each entry your HFA is submitting. The completed entry form will become the first page of your entry.

This form is a fillable PDF. Type your information into the entry form and save it as a PDF. Please do not write on or scan the entry form. **Questions: Call 202-624-7710 or email awards@ncsha.org.**

Entry Title: Enter your entry's title exactly as you wish it to be published on the NCSHA website and in the awards program.

Category:

Subcategory:

Entry Summary: A 15-word (max) summary of the program, project, or practice you are entering.

HFA:

HFA Staff Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Visual Aids:

Are you mailing to NCSHA 10 copies of any visual aids that cannot be included in your entry PDF? Yes No

Payment:

My HFA is mailing a check to NCSHA.
My HFA is emailing the credit card authorization form to awards@ncsha.org.

MassHousing
Housing Protections for Domestic Violence Survivors
Special Need Housing / Housing for Persons with Special Needs

Overview

MassHousing's mission statement drives the work of the Agency with these words, "MassHousing will confront the housing challenges facing the Commonwealth to improve the lives of its people." Nontraditional renters and borrowers underserved by the mainstream mortgage or rental markets, veterans, seniors, the homeless, ex-offenders reentering the community, individuals struggling with substance abuse, and the physically and intellectually disabled are most in need of MassHousing's programs and are those for whom MassHousing commits resources in terms of financing and social programming.

MassHousing has also long supported survivors of domestic violence. In fact, MassHousing's Tenant Selection Plan includes a preference for those displaced by domestic violence. Over the past 15 years, MassHousing staff have chaired and participated in the Governor's Council to Address Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence Housing Workgroup. Additionally, MassHousing's Community Services Department Director, Thaddeus Miles, co-chaired the 2016 Massachusetts White Ribbon Day Campaign, which encourages men to speak out against violence against women.

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization Act of 2013 extended protections against housing discrimination or eviction due to domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or sexual assault to tenants in federally assisted housing. In 2016, HUD issued the final rule in relation to the VAWA reauthorization which further outlined the responsibilities of housing providers.

MassHousing has undertaken a broad VAWA initiative to assist all of the Agency's customers – owners and agents – in implementing HUD's VAWA guidance and other best practices to assist survivors. The goal for residents/survivors is to seek safety through emergency transfers or lease enforcement against the perpetrator; and for applicants/survivors to be able to access affordable housing opportunities.

The Need

As many as 57% of all homeless women report that domestic violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness. Nationally, in a single day, domestic violence programs provided emergency shelter and transitional housing to 41,195 survivors and their children, but were unable to meet 7,914 other requests for shelter or housing. In Massachusetts, on the same day, domestic violence programs provided emergency shelter and transitional housing to 765 survivors and their children, but were unable to meet 331 other requests for shelter or housing.

MassHousing's Multi-Faceted Response: Training and Resource Sharing

In partnership with the Massachusetts Governor's Council, MassHousing has developed a two-part training to assist housing professionals working with residents who are survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

Part One of the training, *Introduction to Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking*, provides housing professionals with a foundation for understanding and working with applicants and residents who are survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and/or stalking. Participants learn from local domestic violence service providers about the cycle of violence, the pattern of power and control, the impact of traumatic experiences, and the resources and community partners in their communities.

Part Two of the training, *Housing Protections for Victims of Domestic Violence, Rape, Sexual Assault and Stalking*, outlines the protections against housing discrimination or eviction due to domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or sexual assault to tenants in federally assisted housing under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization Act of 2013. It also covers the responsibilities of housing providers, and addresses documentation requirements and other practical issues, including required notices, emergency transfers and plans, lease bifurcations, reporting and recordkeeping.

MassHousing is compiling the information from both trainings into a comprehensive handbook for housing and service providers, similar to its nationally recognized Reasonable Accommodations Handbook. The handbook follows the structure of the two-part training in providing foundational information, housing responsibilities, and finally, by integrating the housing and direct service perspectives through case studies. The handbook is being developed in partnership with housing providers and direct service providers to ensure that the information is realistic, substantive, and impactful for any reader. The VAWA handbook will be published later in 2018 and will be made available to all those who attend the training.

Facilitating Discussions and Problem Solving

On April 12, 2018, MassHousing conducted a VAWA roundtable discussion with property management staff from the New England Association of Affordable Housing Management Association (NEAHMA). Asset Managers discussed the nuances of VAWA legislation as it relates to housing as well as case studies that have come to their attention over the last year. MassHousing's Community Services Department Staff presented various community resources available as well as a resource guide including relevant notices, forms, professional resources, and Massachusetts specific resources. Attendees also had the opportunity to discuss difficult situations and solicit advice on specific cases they have encountered at their developments.

Searchable Database to Assist with Emergency Transfers

MassHousing has partnered with a nonprofit in MassHousing known as the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) to integrate information about VAWA-related waiting list and emergency transfer preferences within an online accessible housing registry known as, "MassAccess." MassAccess is a free online program managed by CHAPA that matches people with disabilities with accessible housing in the community, and serves as a searchable database of affordable housing across the Commonwealth. Notably, the new MassAccess VAWA-module allows properties to indicate whether they offer a preference for new and emergency transfer applicants meeting VAWA criteria.

With a searchable database of VAWA preferences, management agents can meet their obligations under the VAWA Final Rule to make reasonable efforts to assist tenants requesting a VAWA emergency transfer. MassHousing will also partner with CHAPA, the Governor's Council, and Casa Myrna (Boston's largest provider of domestic violence awareness efforts) to train SafeLink advocates working on the statewide domestic violence hotline, as well as other advocates, on how to search the MassAccess database in order to utilize this tool most effectively.

Connecting to Other Successful Partnerships

New Lease for Homeless Families is an innovative collaboration between affordable housing developers, social service providers, MassHousing and other government entities that works to reduce homelessness by targeting affordable homes to families in Massachusetts's emergency shelter system. Since its inception, New Lease has placed 310 homeless families into affordable homes. MassHousing is now working with New Lease to expand its network of family shelter providers to include a domestic violence shelter as well. This is important, because by placing families in domestic violence shelters into affordable homes, those shelter beds become available to other survivors fleeing from their unsafe situations.

Through education and outreach efforts, MassHousing is working to ensure that its residents, employees and business partners have the tools necessary to recognize and facilitate appropriate interventions for survivors of domestic abuse.