



# **An Overview of Family Homelessness in the Commonwealth**

Libby Hayes  
Homes for Families

# Agenda

About Homes for Families  
History and Context  
Preventing Homelessness  
Emergency Assistance Shelter  
Housing  
Closing  
Q&A



# Homes for Families

- Dedicated to the Inclusion and Leadership of Families who have experienced homelessness
- Membership organization of family shelter providers
- Work in partnership with all stakeholders
- Our Vision and Our Collective Voice drive our work
- Leadership Development, Policy Advocacy, Community Organizing, Technical Assistance, Research and Program Development
- Acknowledging my bias

# Polling Questions

## HISTORY AND CONTEXT



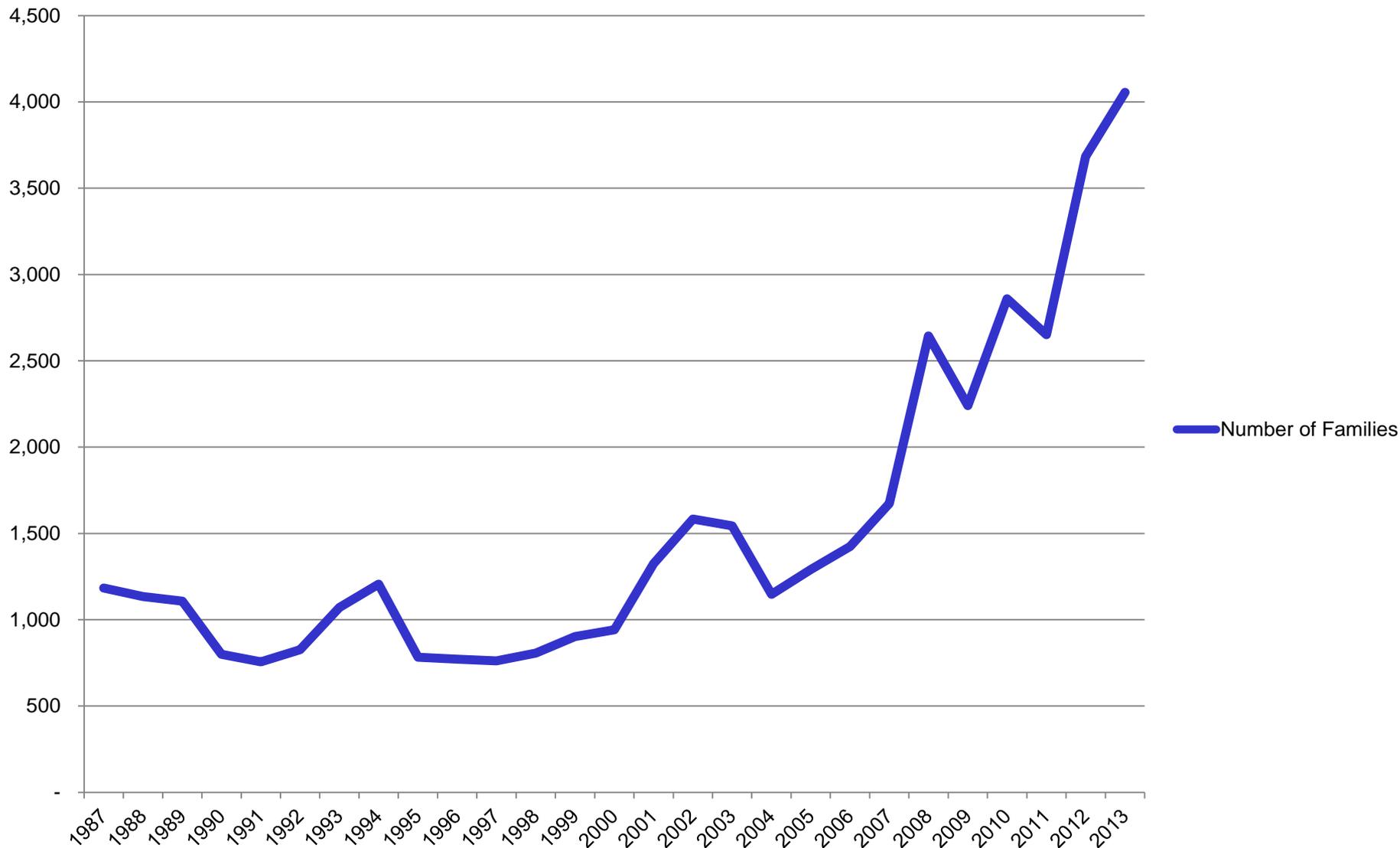


**Chapter 450 of the MA general laws was enacted in the fall of 1983, establishing the family shelter system and a legal mandate to provide shelter for all eligible families.**

*“a program of emergency assistance to needy families with children and pregnant women with no other children- [including] temporary shelter as necessary to alleviate homelessness when such family has no feasible alternative housing available”*



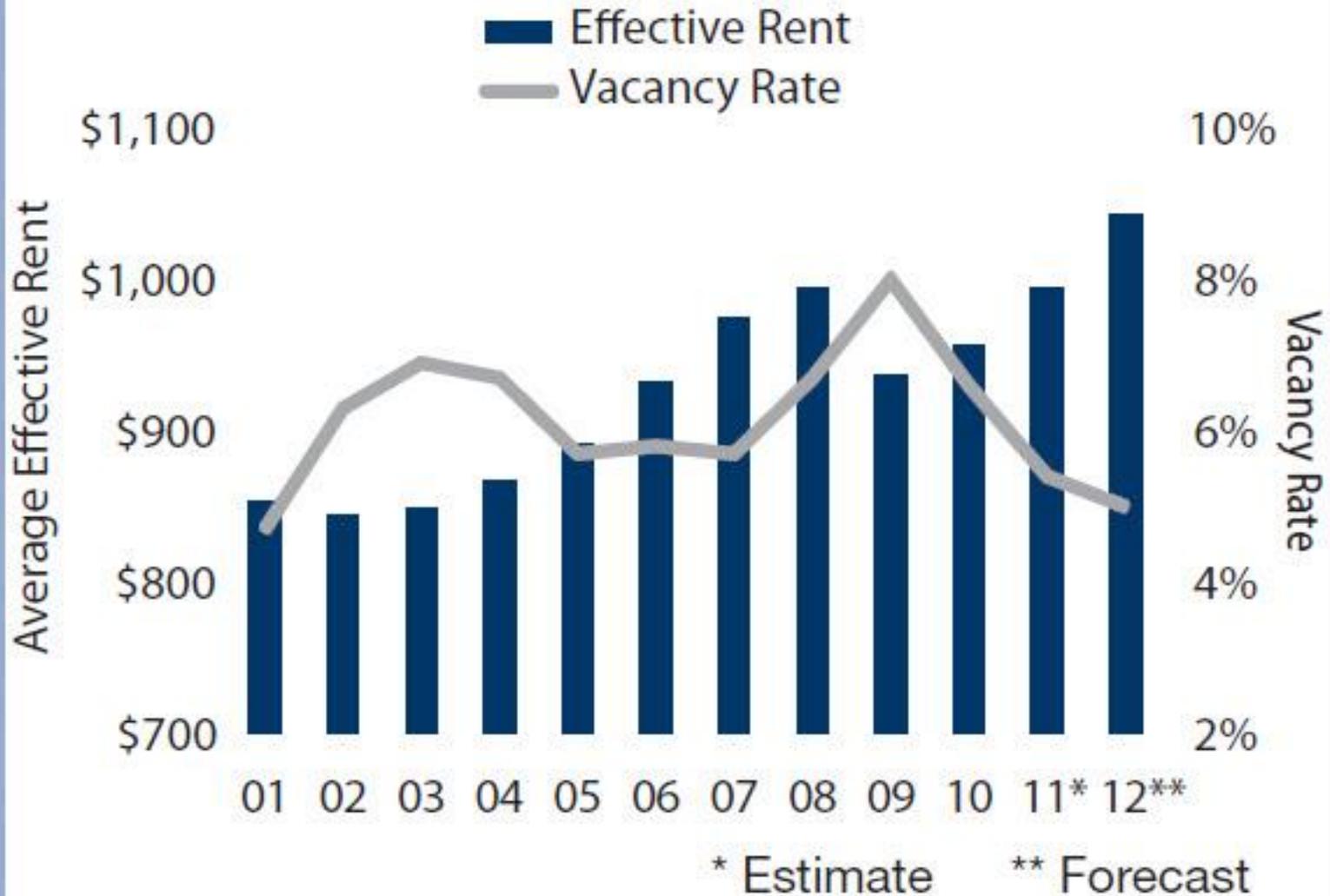
# Average Nightly Number of Families in EA Shelters/Motels Over Time



\*No data prior to 1987

Sources: The graph is based on point in time counts of the number of families in the Emergency Assistance System. All data from 1987-2009 originated from the Department of Transitional Assistance (Department of Public Welfare) through information requests, quarterly reports, and special reports. Data from 2009 to present originated from the Department of Housing and Community Development and was shared through data requests for monthly reports. The Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless provided much of the data from their files.

# Apartment Rent and Vacancy Trends



Source: Marcus & Millichap,  
2012 National Apartment Report

# The cost of rent has outpaced wages

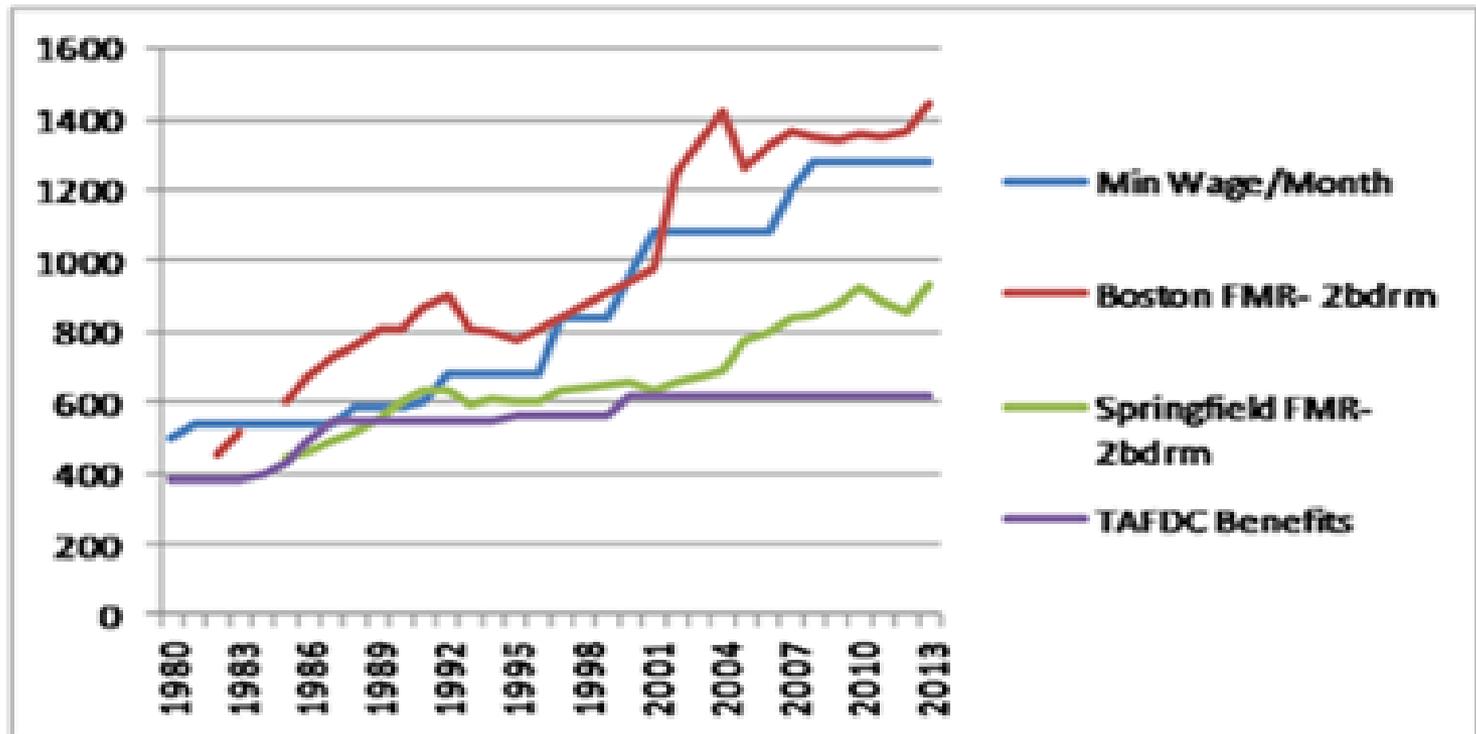


Figure 1: Minimum Wage, TAFDC, FMR Comparison Graph

## Affordability at 30% of Income

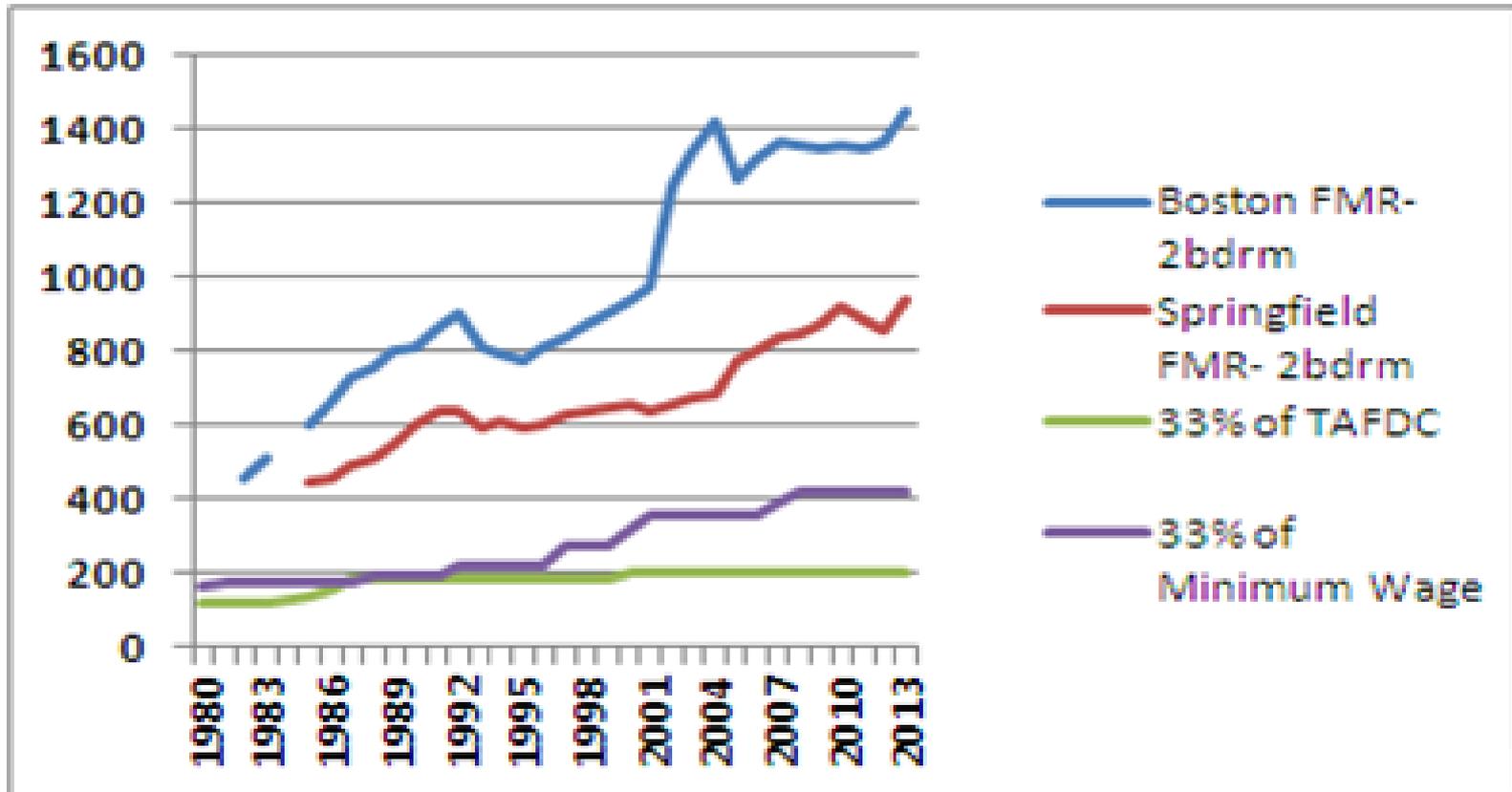


Figure 2: Applying the Golden Rule of Housing

# Disinvestments in Housing Subsidies

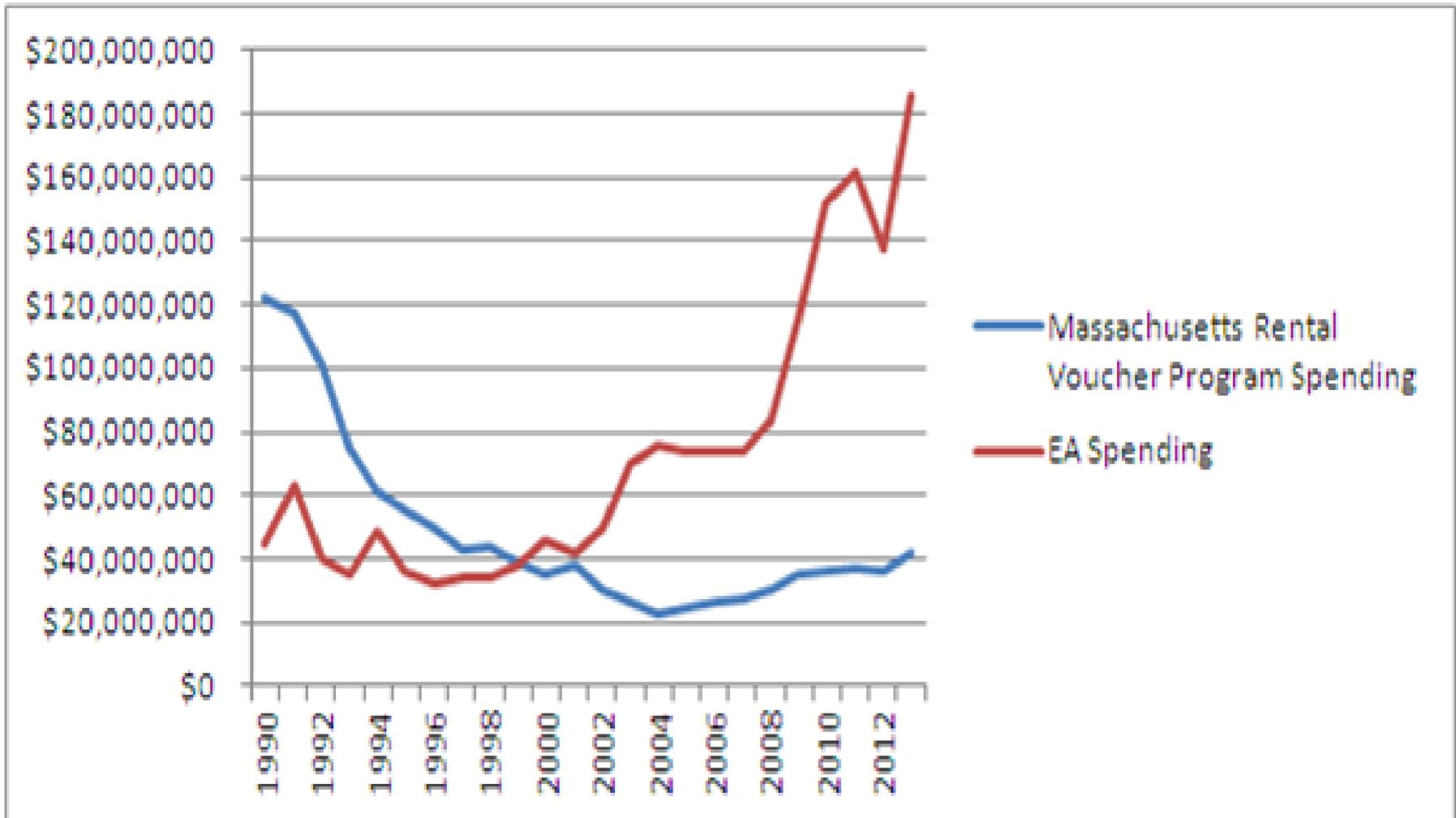


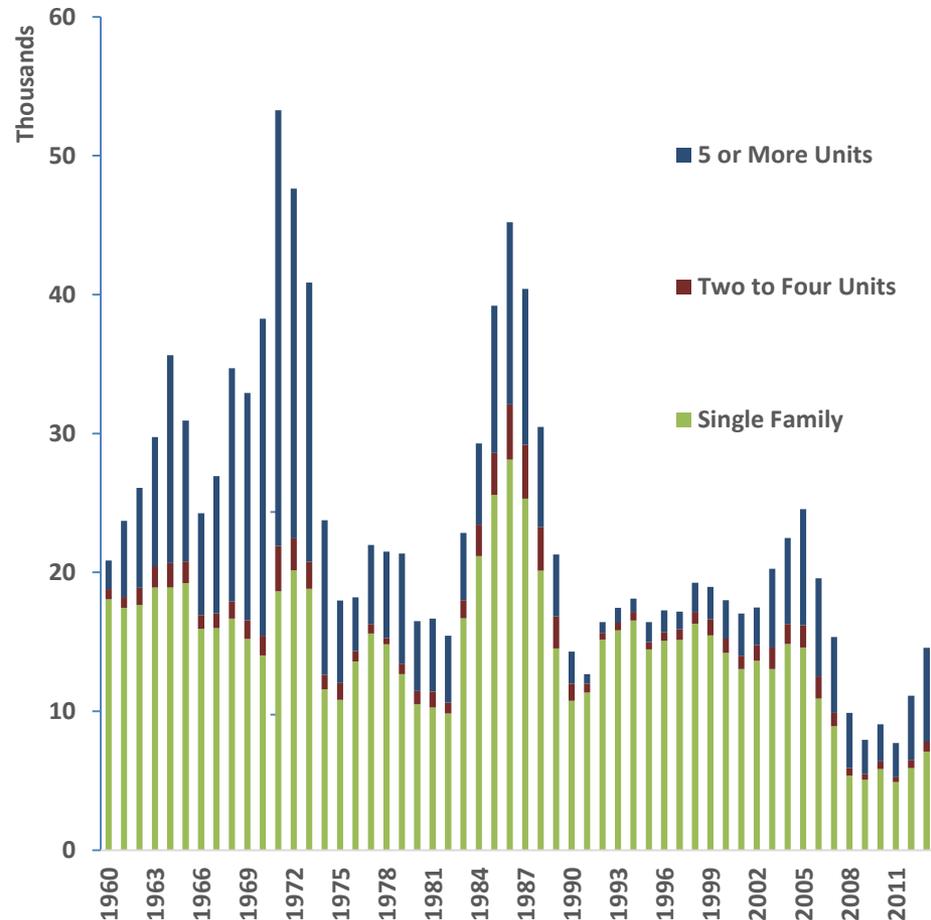
Figure 4: Shelter Spending Increases as MRVP Decreases

## The production of new housing units in Massachusetts has slowed since the 1980s.

Since 1960, housing production in Massachusetts peaked in 1971, with over 53,000 new units of housing. After a sharp decline in the mid-1970s, production recovered to over 45,000 units in 1986. Housing production declined again with the late 1980s/early 1990s recession, and has truly never recovered. Housing production has only exceeded 20,000 units a year in the years 2003 to 2005, and declined to 7,941 in 2009.

Housing production is on the increase, with 14,569 units produced in 2013, and in good news for renters, a high percentage of the units (46 percent) were in buildings with five or more units.

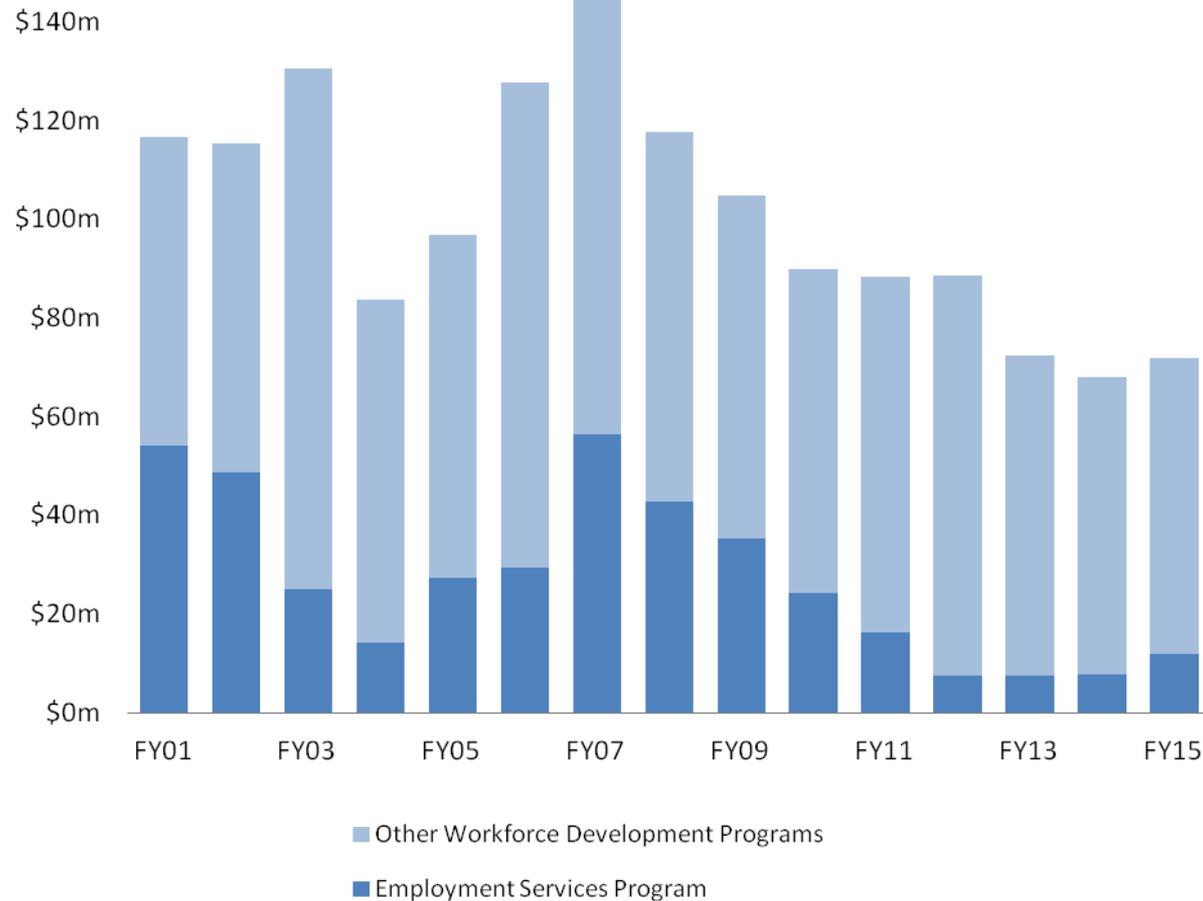
In 2001, a report by Northeastern University suggested that Greater Boston needed to produce more than 15,000 units a year in order to meet growth and begin to address the tight housing market. In only one year (2005), has this goal been met.



Source: US Census Bureau, Building Permit Survey

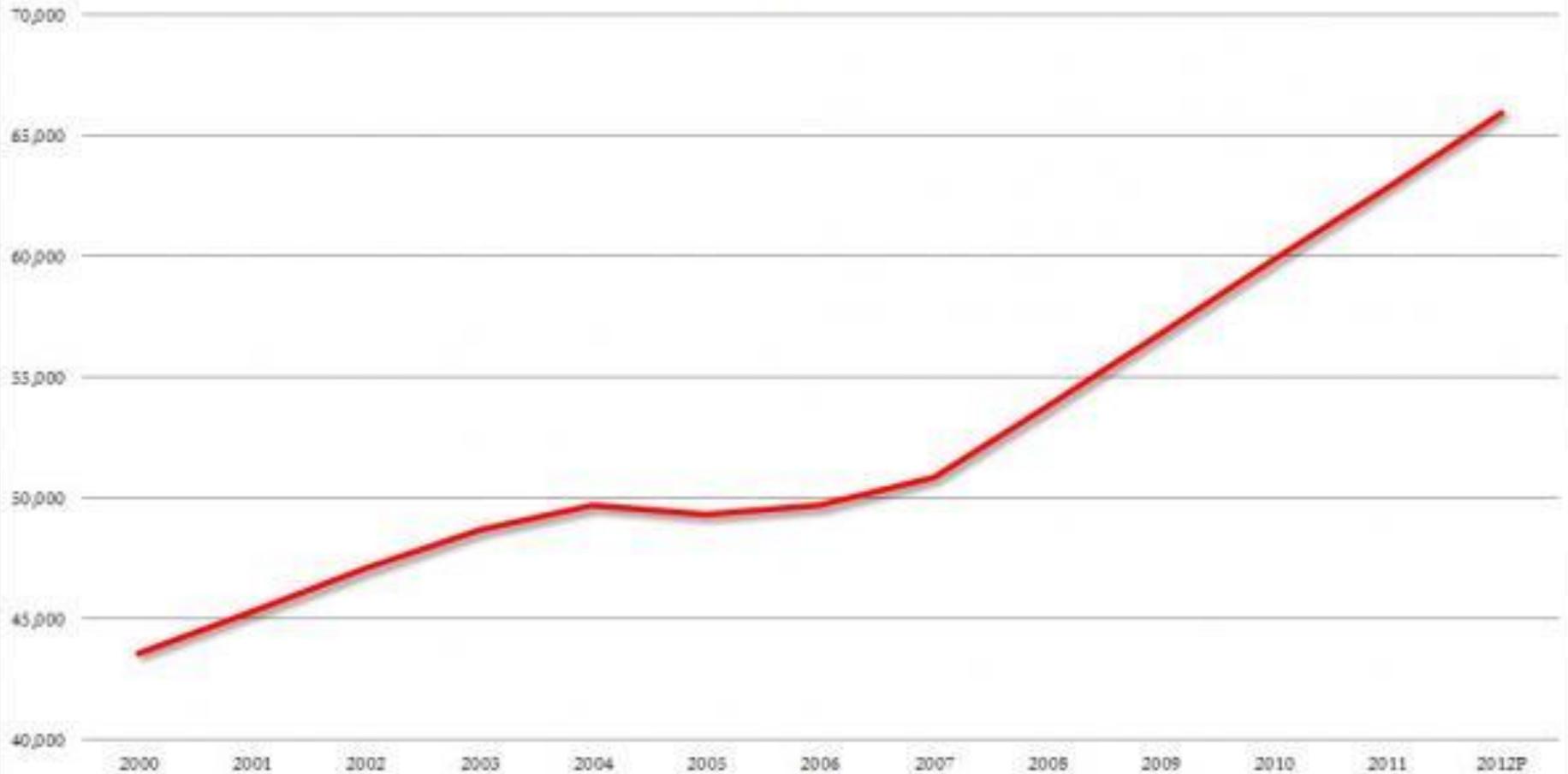


## Work Programs Cut 38%



# Drastic increase in the number of Americans in Poverty

Number of Americans Below 125% of Poverty Level ('000s)



*Santiz Cruzat Barrios, AP, Zero Hedge*



# Prevention

Private Prevention Resources  
Mainstream Resources  
Local Interventions  
State Homelessness Prevention

Housing Consumer Education Centers:

<http://www.masshousinginfo.org/>



## Prevention Continued

To be eligible for **RAFT**:

**Your family must be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.**

**Your family (two or more people) must include at least one dependent child under the age of 21; or you can be a pregnant woman who is head of household. *Recently launched pilot program expanding access to individuals.***

**At least one member of your family must be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen.**

**Your family income must be at or below 50% of the area median income (AMI). Priority under 30% AMI**



# Evictions

[←](#) [→](#) [G](#) [www.masslegalhelp.org/housing/evictions](http://www.masslegalhelp.org/housing/evictions)

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## Evictions

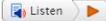
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**Evictions in Massachusetts: Introduction**

To evict you, **Your landlord must take you to court.**



The most important thing to know about evictions in Massachusetts is a landlord must take you to court.

The first and most important thing to know about eviction law in Massachusetts is that a landlord cannot make a tenant move out of her home without going to court first. No matter what a landlord or a landlord's lawyer says, a landlord must go to court and obtain permission from a judge to evict a tenant.

If you get an eviction notice and you want to stay in your apartment or you want more time to find a new place, you must respond quickly to any documents you receive. Depending on your situation and whether the landlord has followed the law, you may be able to prevent the eviction. If you cannot prevent it, you still may be able to get more time to find a new place to live. If your landlord has violated certain laws, you may be entitled to money to compensate you for these violations.

If you do not defend yourself in an eviction case, chances are a judge will order you to move out and you will have missed the opportunity to raise any legal claims or negotiate an agreement about how to resolve the issues.

[Chapter 13 of Legal Tactics: Tenants Rights in Private Housing](#) is an Adobe Acrobat file that tells you how the eviction process works, what rights you have throughout the process, and how you can prevent or delay an eviction. The [Eviction Timeline](#) will give you a timeline of what to expect if you receive a 30-day or 14-day eviction notice.

This chapter does not take the place of having a lawyer or provide you with every detail involving evictions. But it will,



- Types of shelter
- What does, “Massachusetts is a Right to Shelter State” mean?

# Polling Questions

SHIELTER





This is coming from someone who is currently in an EA motel, and has been here for almost an entire year...

Why on Earth would anyone declare themselves homeless, over a petty argument, falling out?

Do you know how embarrassing it is to go to DHCD/DTA and apply for shelter?

Do you know how humiliating it is to lug trash bags of you and your children's belongings into the brick building, and the onlookers knowing exactly why?

Do you know what it is to have someone judge you, to see if you are "needy" enough for "help"?

Do you know what it is to be hungry at night, but you cannot cook because you cannot fit more than 5 items of food, or even 1 single gallon of milk, in your tiny motel "fridge"?

Do you know what it is to survive off of school food, hot pockets and the occasional McDonald's when money permits?

Do you know what it is to be considered lazy, selfish, self-centered, uneducated, incompetent... because you became a homeless PARENT?

Do you know what it is for your innocent toddler to pray to God every single night for a home? Do you know what it is to be INVISIBLE!?

Because if you did, you would know that we do not declare ourselves homeless to take up the "tax payers" money. Nobody wants this life!!!

-signed Homeless Mother, College Student, Employee



# Emergency Assistance

- Or often called, EA, Emergency Shelter, or the Family Shelter System
- 46 agencies across the state providing 3,442 units of shelter in congregates, scattered sites, and co-sheltering
- 241 families in motel rooms across the state (as of 10-17-2016)
- Families who are eligible for EA also qualify for the HomeBASE program



## Families must meet Income Guidelines\*

| Family Size | Monthly Income | Fair Market Rent | Full Time Monthly Earnings @ Min Wage (\$10/hr) | Part Time Monthly Earnings @ Average Renter Wage (\$18.43/hr) | Annual Income Cap |
|-------------|----------------|------------------|---|---|-------------------|
| 1           | \$1,139        | \$1,078          | <b>\$1,640</b>                                  | <b>\$1,511</b>  | \$13,668          |
| 2           | \$1,535        | \$1,347          |   |   | \$18,420          |
| 3           | \$1,932        | \$1,677          |   |   | \$23,184          |
| 4           | \$2,329        | \$1,868          |   |   | \$27,948          |
| 5           | \$2,726        |                  |   |   | \$32,712          |
| 6           | \$3,122        |                  |   |   | \$37,464          |
| 7           | \$3,520        |                  |   |   | \$42,240          |
| 8           | \$3,919        |                  |   |   | \$47,028          |

*The FPL is re-evaluated each January*

**The asset limit for EA is \$2,500.**



## EA Categorical Eligibility

The State Budget Language was changed in FY13 to include four distinct categories of eligibility. Households that do not meet one of the categories are not eligible.

1. Fleeing domestic violence
2. Flood, fire, or natural disaster
3. No fault eviction
4. Health and safety

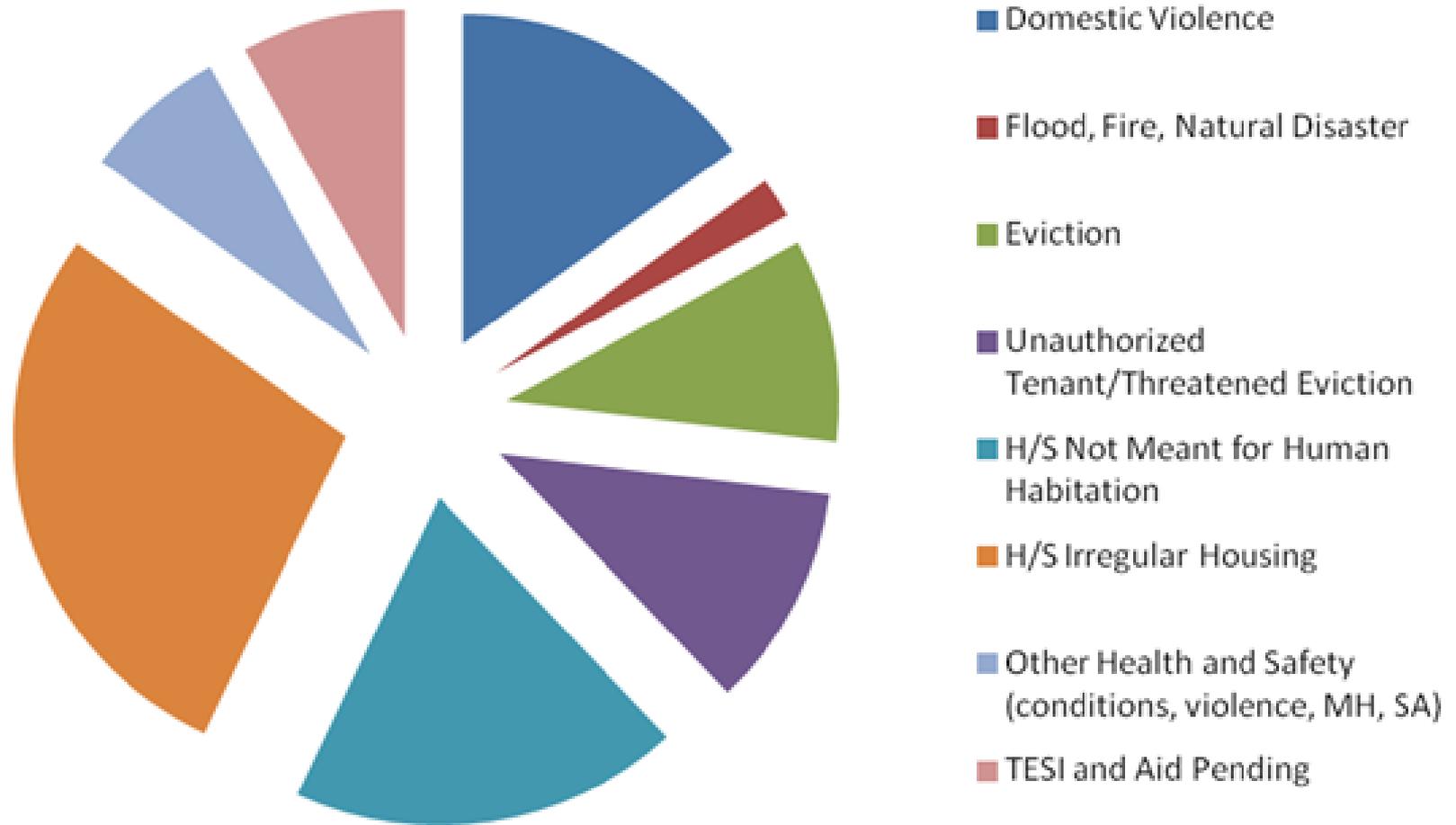
For more information:

<http://www.mass.gov/hed/housing/stabilization/emergency-assistance.html>

Telephonic Application: 866-584-0653

<http://www.masslegalservices.org/content/2013-emergency-assistance-advocacy-guide>

# Reasons for Entry into Emergency Assistance July and Aug 2016

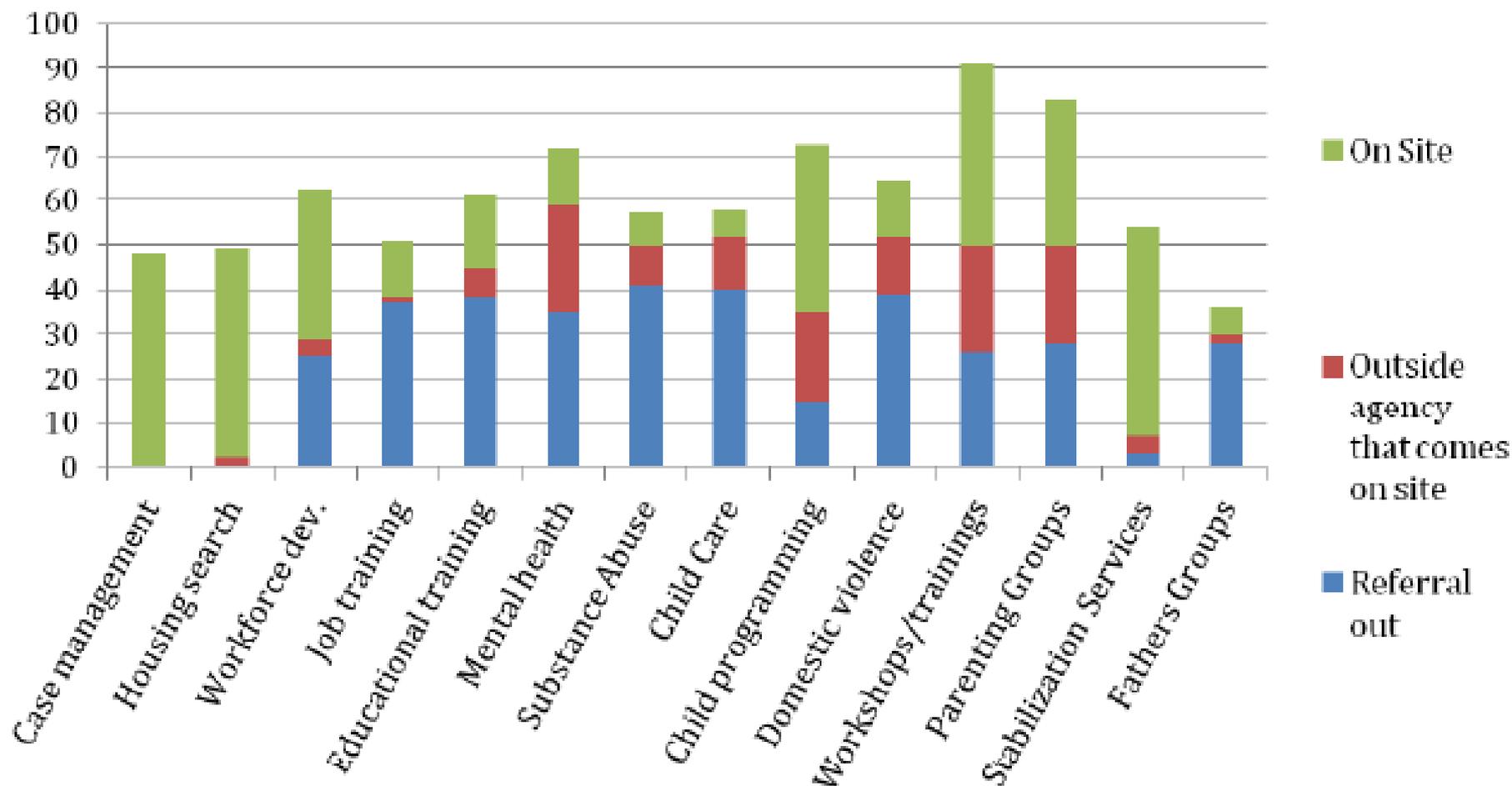




# HomeBASE

- A tool for diversion and re-housing
- Up to \$8,000
- Flexible use
- Paid to vendors or landlords
- Stabilization services
- Cannot access more than once per year
- 24 month bar if terminated

## Services Offered to Homeless Families



n=48

Source: HFF

# **373.....10X8.....40....26....18....7....5**

You may be wondering what these numbers mean. I use them to help paint a picture of what my life was like not too long ago.

373 is the number of days I spent living in a 10X8 room, 40 miles away from anyone I knew, with 26 other families, sharing a refrigerator with 18 people, having a curfew of 7pm, when my daughter was just 5 months old.

White walls with no option of decorating the way I would like.

Community bathroom with 7 other people with different standards of cleanliness.

Not being able to let my daughter explore her surroundings, because they only consisted of hard institutional floors and heavy traffic.

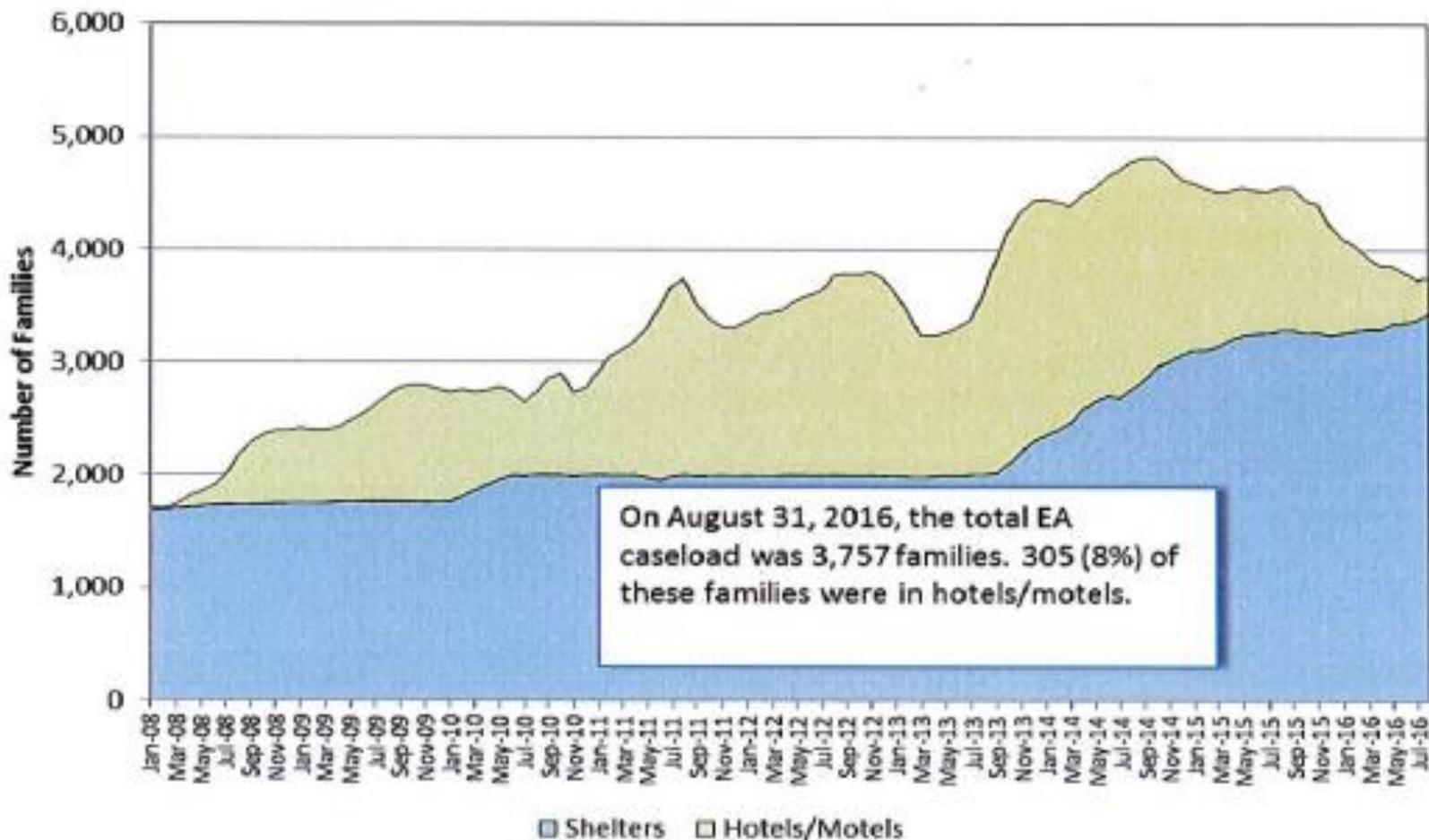
I was judged by what time I ate, when I gave my daughter a bath... and by how clean my room was.

There is only one other place that I can think of where a person's every step is monitored and criticized...but I am not a criminal.

**I am a mother who is trying to give her daughter the stability and quality of life that she deserves.**

# EA Caseload

Average Daily EA Shelter & Hotel/Motel Caseload, Jan. 2008 - Aug. 2016





Despite the fact that while shelter is not where I want to raise my son, I have to say that I am grateful that shelter isn't a horrific place.

As a matter of fact, the staff here is non-judgmental and takes my homelessness situation as seriously as I do. I know that in my toughest moment I have an entire team thinking about and helping to plan my success.

# Polling Questions

# Housing





# Housing

MRVP

Local Housing Authorities

Statewide Lists

Priority Status

Lotteries

Transfers

HCEC



# General Housing Search Tips

- Consider all areas, but only apply where the family is willing to live
- Public and subsidized housing, HUD and MassHousing
- Keep information current, including address and family size
- Monitor status on waitlist by calling monthly
- Ask about each housing authorities' priorities and preferences
- Provide supporting documents when applying for emergency status (fire reports, DV documents, shelter letters, disability information)
- Be educated about tenant rights and housing laws. If discrimination is suspected contact legal aid
- Identify barriers and establish plans to counter
- Appeal any denials

**We want to take our place in society, like everyone else.  
We have paid dearly for lives we didn't sign up for,  
but the lives we were handed,  
and even though we may not have the pedigrees of privilege  
we have something equally valuable,  
the lived experience of poverty,  
And with this, we can contribute greatly  
to the understanding of the genesis of poverty,  
we bring the data to life,  
interpret as authentically, but with a different lens,  
we become transformed by our participation,  
becoming people who understand our own true value,  
becoming people we are proud to be.**

-Julia Tripp

# Join Us



@HFFma

#OurVoice #HousingSolutions #EndHomelessness



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<https://homesforfamilies.wordpress.com>

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[lhayes@homesforfamilies.org](mailto:lhayes@homesforfamilies.org)

Questions:

