

# I found housing, now what?

Now that you've found housing, there's some things you should think about before you move into your new home and as you get settled....

## Before You Move In

Before you move into your new home, you may be asked to sign a lease. A lease is a written agreement between you and your new landlord. It generally includes how long you agree to rent your home for, how much you will pay for rent, who will pay for utilities, and rules you must follow to stay in good standing with your landlord.

If you're not asked to sign a lease, you are considered a "tenant at will." This is a less-formal arrangement between you and your landlord. You may still be asked to sign a rental agreement, or there may be just a verbal agreement between you and your landlord.

If you're given a lease or rental agreement, make sure you read it carefully before signing. Ask your landlord about anything you don't understand. You can also ask a trusted person for help with understanding what you're agreeing to.

Make sure you also understand important information about your new home including how to pay your rent, what to do with trash, and who to call when there's an issue. This information may be included in your lease or rental agreement, but make sure to ask your landlord if it's not.

[You can use the worksheet in our Finding Home guide to document the questions you want to ask your landlord.](#)

## Utilities

Before you move in, make sure to ask your new landlord about utilities. Some utilities may be included in your monthly rent, while others you may have to pay out of pocket.

Some utilities are essential, while others you can decide if you want or not. For some utilities, like gas and electricity, there may be only one option for who provides it. For other utilities, like cable or telephone, you may be able to choose who provides it.

For any utility that is not paid for by your landlord, you can also use the internet to find out what companies serve your area and what their prices are. Many utility companies offer special rates or packages for people with limited income. If possible, research utility options before you move in and arrange to have them set up before or shortly after your move-in date.

The links below can help you find utility providers and discount services in your area. [You can use the worksheet in our Finding Home guide to keep track of what you find.](#)



## Electricity

### Help paying your utility bill

[www.mass.gov/info-details/help-paying-your-utility-bill](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/help-paying-your-utility-bill)

### Electric service overview

[www.mass.gov/info-details/electric-service-overview](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/electric-service-overview)

### Find My Electric, Gas, and Water Company

[www.mass.gov/info-details/find-my-electric-gas-and-water-company](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/find-my-electric-gas-and-water-company)

## Gas

### Help paying your utility bill

[www.mass.gov/info-details/help-paying-your-utility-bill](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/help-paying-your-utility-bill)

### Find My Electric, Gas, and Water Company

[www.mass.gov/info-details/find-my-electric-gas-and-water-company](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/find-my-electric-gas-and-water-company)

## Oil

### Heating Oil Contracts Guide

[www.mass.gov/guides/heating-oil-contracts-guide](http://www.mass.gov/guides/heating-oil-contracts-guide)

## Telephone

### Lifeline Program

[www.lifelinesupport.org](http://www.lifelinesupport.org)

### compare cell phone plans

[www.whistleout.com/CellPhones](http://www.whistleout.com/CellPhones)

## Internet

### compare internet plans

[www.whistleout.com/Internet](http://www.whistleout.com/Internet)



## Moving-Related Costs

Moving into a new home can come with a lot of expenses. You may need to buy furniture, appliances, linens, other household necessities. Some of these things you will need right away, while others you will be able to obtain over time.

You may also have to pay a security deposit, first and last month's rent, or for new locks and keys. The security deposit covers repairs for damage that you may make to your new home in the future. The last month's rent helps ensure that the landlord gets paid if you move out without giving notice or have unpaid back rent. Both the security deposit and last month's rent will be paid back to you when you move out, if they are not used. If you're having trouble paying these expenses, you can ask your landlord if they would be willing to set up a payment plan. Make sure to get a receipt from your landlord for any expenses you pay before moving in.

### Learn about paying a security deposit

[www.mass.gov/info-details/learn-about-paying-a-security-deposit](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/learn-about-paying-a-security-deposit)

Here are some other ways to get help with your moving related costs...

**If you get support from Department of Mental Health (DMH), contingency funds may be available to help.** Contingency funds can be used for incidental expenses that support your wellness and safety. Ask your Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) or Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) team leader about this.

**If you are enrolled in a MassHealth Accountable Care Organization (ACO), you may be eligible for the Health Related Social Needs (HRSN) Services program (formerly known as the Flexible Services Program).** HRSN can provide health-related housing supports for members. To be eligible, you must have a behavioral health condition or complex physical health condition and need assistance with one or more daily activities and have at least one risk factor like being homeless or being at risk of homelessness. You can reach out to your ACO to get started.

**Your local Community Action Program (CAP) may have funds to help with one-time emergency needs.** You can reach out to your local CAP to ask. Find your CAP:

[www.masscap.org/agencies](http://www.masscap.org/agencies).

**You can also contact Mass 2-1-1.** This is an information and referral service that helps people find resources to meet their basic needs. They may be able to help you find other resources to cover moving-related costs. You can call Mass 2-1-1 to get started. Learn more about 2-1-1: [www.mass211.org](http://www.mass211.org).

[You can use the worksheet in our Finding Home guide to help plan for moving costs, and who can help with these costs.](#)



## Groceries and Food Resources

Buying groceries can be a big ongoing expense. The Food Source Hotline can help people find food pantries, community meals, and other food-related resources in their community. The Food Source Hotline can also screen callers for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility. [You can use the worksheet in our Finding Home guide to keep track of the food-related resources that you find.](#)

### Food Source Hotline

[www.projectbread.org/foodsource-hotline](http://www.projectbread.org/foodsource-hotline)

### SNAP Benefits

[www.mass.gov/snap-benefits-formerly-food-stamps](http://www.mass.gov/snap-benefits-formerly-food-stamps)

If you are enrolled in a MassHealth Accountable Care Organization (ACO), you may be eligible for the **Health Related Social Needs (HRSN) Services program** (formerly known as the Flexible Services Program). HRSN can help provide health-related nutrition supports for members. To be eligible, you must have a behavioral health condition or complex physical health condition and need assistance with one or more daily activities and have at least one risk factor like being at risk for nutritional deficiency. You can reach out to your ACO to get started.

## Health Care and Other Essential Supports

If your new home is a far distance from where you lived before, you may want to change the places you were getting health care and other essential supports. Think about each of the places you get health care now, how often you get care there, and how easy it will be to get there from your new home. Also start thinking about options for finding new care, and who can help you with this. [You can use the worksheet in our Finding Home guide to help you think through this.](#)

## Finding Peer Support

Within the context of the mental health system, peer support means getting support from and giving support to others who have experienced mental health symptoms, have been diagnosed with a mental health condition, have received mental health services, or have similar “lived experience” with the aim of connection, healing, and mutual growth. There’s a lot of different options for getting peer support! [You can use the worksheet in our Finding Home guide to keep track of the options you want to try.](#)

Here are a few peer support options you may want to check out:

**Getting involved with your local Recovery Learning Community (RLC) is a great way to get connected with peer support.** RLCs are communities of people who come together to support one another. RLCs offer peer support groups, one-on-one support, wellness-based workshops, and more. They are free, open to all who want to join, and no insurance is needed. Find your local Recovery Learning Community: [www.mass.gov/info-details/recovery-learning-communities](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/recovery-learning-communities).



**If you're a young person, you can check out the Young Adult Access Center in your area for support by and for young people like you.** Each center helps young adults build skills for independent living, learning, and employment, and offers opportunities for peer support and mentoring. Find your local Young Adult Access Center: [www.speakingofhope.org/access-centers/](http://www.speakingofhope.org/access-centers/).

**Other options for getting peer support include NAMI Connection support groups and NAMI Peer-to-Peer classes, Depression Bipolar Support Alliance groups, and more.** Find other peer support options: [www.namimass.org/peersupport](http://www.namimass.org/peersupport).

**If you are someone who deals with substance use or addiction, you can join your local Peer Recovery Support Center for mutual support opportunities.** They offer support groups, one-on-one support, and more. They are free, open to all who want to join, and no insurance is needed. Find your local Peer Recovery Support Center: [www.mass.gov/info-details/peer-recovery-support-centers](http://www.mass.gov/info-details/peer-recovery-support-centers).

## Meeting People

Beyond peer support, there are a lot of different ways to meet people who are near your new home. [You can use the worksheet in our Finding Home guide to keep track of the things you want to try!](#)

Here are some ideas you may want to check out...

**Volunteer!** Volunteering is a great way to meet people and give back at the same time! Try Volunteer Match to find opportunities near you: [www.volunteermatch.org](http://www.volunteermatch.org).

**Take a class!** Local community colleges, and sometimes local high schools or vocational schools, offer low-cost classes on any number of topics. This can be a fun way to learn a new skill while meeting others. Local craft stores like Michael's and Joanne Fabrics also offer low-cost classes on activities like quilting, knitting, scrap booking, or flower arranging.

**Try sports!** If you like to play sports, you can try an amateur sports team in your area! Use League Lineup to find team near you: [www.leaguelineup.com/search-teams](http://www.leaguelineup.com/search-teams).

**Take an exercise class!** Exercise classes are a fun way to meet people and keep healthy at the same time! Try ClassPass to find classes near you: [www.classpass.com](http://www.classpass.com).

**Try a house of worship!** Houses of worship can be a good place to start building community.

**Find a group on MeetUp!** MeetUp is website that you can use to find other people with the same interest in your area.

Other options for meeting new people include local clubs, game stores, group bike rides, and more. Google can be helpful for finding activities such in your area!

