

Who can help me with a housing search?

Your local Independent Living Center...

Independent Living Centers (ILCs) are run by and for people with disabilities. They help people explore options and supports for living independently, and often help people with finding housing. ILCs can tell people about housing options, show them how to search for housing, help them fill out housing applications, and help them ask for housing accommodations. Many ILCs offer free workshops about housing, which can be a good place to start with your search.

Use the link below to find the ILC that serves your area. You can look on their website to see if they offer a housing workshop, or give them a call and ask for help with housing.

Massachusetts Independent Living Centers

www.masilc.org/findacenter

Your local Housing Consumer Education Center...

Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCECs) are programs that help people make informed decisions about their housing situation. HCECs provide housing search assistance, budget counseling, utility assistance, information about housing rights, help accessing rental assistance programs, and more.

Use the link below to find the HCEC that serves your area. You can give them a call and ask for help with housing.

Housing Consumer Education Centers

www.masshousinginfo.org

You local Community Action Program...

Community Action Programs (CAPs) are organizations that help people and families gain self-sufficiency. They address the causes of poverty through programs that fight unemployment, inadequate housing, poor nutrition, and lack of educational opportunity. Many (but not all) CAPs can help someone with a housing search.

Use the link below to find the CAP that serves your area. You can look on their website to see if they offer help with a housing search.

Massachusetts Community Action Programs

www.masscap.org/agencies.html



Other sources of support...

If you get support from the Department of Mental Health, the housing specialist on your Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) team (every ACCS team has one) or the your primary care manager or team leader on your Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) team can help with a housing search.

If you are participating in a Community Support Program (CSP), your CSP worker can help with a housing search.

Already getting support from a Clubhouse or Recovery Learning Community (RLCs)? Ask there for help with finding housing. Clubhouses and RLCs often support their members with housing searches.

Your therapist, case/care manager, long term supports coordinator, or similar support person may be able to help. This person may not know much about where to look for housing or how to apply, but may be able to help you fill out applications or ask for housing accommodations.



What can I do on my own?

Learn more/think more about housing options...

Read "A Place of My Own," from Autism Housing Pathways. This guide is for everyone, not just people on the autism spectrum! It can help you think through what your housing needs are.

A Place of My Own

www.autismhousingpathways.org/presentations/

Read the "Housing Search Guide for People with Disabilities," from the Citizens Housing & Planning Association (CHAPA). It can also help you think through what your housing needs are, and has information on the most common types of housing for people with disabilities - especially those with limited income.

Read the Housing Search Guide for People with Disabilities

www.chapa.org/housingsearchguide

Get on housing wait lists...

Get on the Section 8 Centralized Wait List. Use the link below to apply to the Centralized List, and update personal information on a previous application. Most (but not all) cities and towns use this application.

Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Centralized Wait List

www.gosection8.com/masscw/

Fill out the Common Housing Application for Massachusetts Public-Housing (CHAMP). Use this link to apply to state-aided public housing, and update personal information on a previous application. Most (but not all) cities and towns use this application.

Common Housing Application for Massachusetts Public-Housing

<https://publichousingapplication.oed.state.ma.us/>

Contact local housing authorities and ask if they participate in the Section 8 Centralized Wait List and accept the CHAMP. If they do not, ask for their applications. You can also ask if they participate in the Alternative Housing Voucher Program or Section 8 Mainstream Program.

Local Housing Authority Contact Listing

www.mass.gov/service-details/local-housing-authority-contact-listing



Additional places to look on your own...

MassHousing finances the construction and preservation of affordable rental housing throughout Massachusetts. Use the link below to get list a of MassHousing-financed properties across the state. Each property maintains its own waitlist, so you have to apply and get on the waitlist for each. But it's worth it, as there can be faster turnover in units. Note that most "elderly" units also accept tenants with disabilities of any age.

MassHousing Developments List

https://www.masshousing.com/portal/server.pt/community/rental_housing/240/looking_for_an_affordable_apartment

The MassAccess Housing Registry helps people find affordable rental and home ownership opportunities in Massachusetts. This is especially a good tool for people who need accessible housing.

MassAccess Housing Registry

www.massaccesshousingregistry.org

The Metrolist is a clearinghouse for income-restricted and affordable housing opportunities in Boston and neighboring communities. It's a great resource for people looking to live in that area.

Metrolist

www.boston.gov/metrolist

Don't rule out...

Tools like Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace, and local newspapers for rooms. Use google to find rooming houses and single-room occupancy opportunities - search for rooming house + city/town name (for example, "rooming houses + Boston"). Check out your local YMCA and YWCA for opportunities, too - many have them!

Craigslist

boston.craigslist.org

Facebook Marketplace

www.facebook.com/marketplace/

YMCAs

www.ymca.net/find-your-y/

YWCA's

www.ywca.org



I have a voucher/unit/apartment, now what?

If you need help with moving-related costs...

If you get support from the Department of Mental Health, contingency funds may be available to help. Ask your primary care manager or team leader about this.

You can reach out to your local Community Action Program (CAP). Some CAPs have funds to help with one-time emergency needs.

Massachusetts Community Action Programs

www.masscap.org/agencies.html

You can call Mass 2-1-1. 2-1-1 is an information and referral service that specializes in helping people meet their basic needs. They may be able to help people find resources to cover moving-related costs. They can also help people find emergency shelter if needed.

If you need help finding food resources...

You can call Mass 2-1-1 for help finding food pantries or community meals. Simply dial 211 from any Massachusetts phone.

Mass 2-1-1

dial 211 or 1-877-211-6277

www.mass211.org

You can also call the Food Source Hotline. The Food Search Hotline is a program of Project Bread. They can help people find food pantries, community meals, and other food-related resources in their community. The Food Search Hotline can also screen callers for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility.

Food Source Hotline

1-800-645-8333

www.projectbread.org/get-help/foodsource-hotline.html



If you want to meet people and find support....

Join your local Recovery Learning Community (RLC) for peer support opportunities. RLCs are communities of people who come together to support one another. They are run by and for people who have personal experience navigating the mental health system or who are experiencing mental health symptoms. RLCs offer peer support groups, one-on-one support, wellness-based training and workshops, and more. They are free, open to all who want to join, and no insurance is needed.

Recovery Learning Communities

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/recovery-learning-communities>

Other options for getting peer support include NAMI Connection support groups and NAMI Peer-to-Peer classes, Hearing Voices support groups, Depression Bipolar Support Alliance groups, Alternatives to Suicide support groups, and warmlines.

Peer Support Resources

www.namimass.org/peer-support/

Join your local Peer Recovery Support Center (PRSC) for mutual support opportunities. PRSCs are run by and for people who have personal experience with substance use. 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.

Peer Recovery Support Centers

https://mahelplineonline.custhelp.com/app/account/opa_result/incident_id/MTMwODA0#description

Other options for meeting new people include local clubs and interest groups, game stores, group bike rides, and more. Google can be really helpful for finding activities in your area. Simply google your city or town + an activity you like or would like to try (for example, "Quincy + board games").

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

Meetup is also a great tool! MeetUp is website that you can use to find other people with the same interest in your area.

MeetUp

www.meetup.com



If you want to request accommodations...

The Keep Your Housing Handbook is a great resource! Written by the Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee, it has information about your right to ask for accommodations in housing, and some sample letters for making the request. It also has some helpful information about how to be a good tenant and neighbor.

Keep Your Housing Handbook

<https://archives.lib.state.ma.us/bitstream/handle/2452/70681/ocn707398152.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

The Consumer's Guide to Fair Housing is another helpful resource. Written by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, it has easy-to-understand information about your rights under the Fair Housing Act.

Consumer's Guide to Fair Housing

hud.gov/sites/documents/DOC_7452.PDF

The Client Services Unit at the Massachusetts Office on Disability may be able to help you with writing the accommodation letter and understanding what your rights are. The Client Services Unit provides information, technical assistance, and advocacy to people with disabilities in Massachusetts. T

Client Services Unit at the Massachusetts Office on Disability

1-800-322-2020

<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/request-information-or-assistance>

If you have been denied an accommodation or have otherwise been discriminated against, you may be able to find free or low-cost legal assistance to help resolve the issue. You can use the Mass Legal Services Legal Aid database to find legal programs that serve where you live. Use the link below, and enter your information.

Mass Legal Services Legal Aid

<https://www.masslegalservices.org/findlegalaid>



Phrases to Know

Market Rent

Market rent is the average cost of rent in a neighborhood or area.

Housing Subsidy

A housing subsidy is a program that helps people pay their rent. Subsidies may come from a housing voucher, or be connected with a public housing project or private housing.

Housing Voucher

Vouchers work like a coupon for rent, covering a set amount of a person's rent each month. Some vouchers are funded by the state, and others are funded by the federal government. There are typically two types of vouchers: mobile vouchers are vouchers that a person can use on any qualified unit and take with them when they move; project-based or site-based vouchers are vouchers that are connected to a specific unit, and stays with the unit when the person moves.

Supportive Housing

Supportive housing is housing that comes with support services that help a person stay in their home. In Massachusetts, most supportive housing is overseen by a state agency like the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Developmental Services (for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities), or the State Head Injury Program at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. People have to be eligible for services from that agency to receive supportive housing.

Adult Family Care

Adult Family Care (AFC - sometimes called Adult Foster Care) is an services for elders and people with disabilities who cannot live safely on their own. Typically with AFC, non-professional caregivers are paid to provide support to the person within their or the person's home. To be eligible for AFC, the person must have MassHealth and need help with at least two activities of daily living. To find out more about AFC, contact your local Independent Living Center.

