

Service Talk Shop: Housing

Date: June 26, 2026

Location: Hayes Conference Room, BPHC

Roses & Thorns

Roses – What’s Working:

- Strong community health worker networks
- Passionate and dedicated staff across the field

Thorns – Key Challenges:

- Destruction of a local homeless encampment
- Clients expect immediate housing support, but systems are slow
- Emergency shelter placements are taking 6+ weeks
- Staffing shortages and capacity strain

Resource Exchange Highlights

Long-Term Housing Options

- Need for more client flexibility
- PSH (Permanent Supportive Housing), MRVP (MassHousing’s Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program), and Section 8 vouchers commonly referenced

Emergency Placements

- Emergency Assistance Shelter
- Peer support groups can help stabilize clients

Client Documentation Tools

- Use e2Boston alerts to track documentation deadlines
- Processes are necessary but time-consuming
- Common documentation challenges: SSN letters, IDs, vital records
- Tip: Set clients up with SSA online portals for easier access

Landlord & Agency Partnerships

- Trusted locations: Braintree Village, Skyline Drive (Braintree/Quincy)
- Agencies: Justice 4 Housing (room rentals), Hearts to Hands (Roxbury), JRI’s upcoming Housing Access Program

Housing Retention Strategies

- Ongoing case management
- Representative payees, budgeting help, housing rights education
- Legal supports (eviction defense, accommodations for disabilities)

Case Manager Trainings

- Resources: Health Law Institute, Helene's Team, BU CADER, MCLE, NEATC
- Topics: Legal rights, systems navigation, trauma-informed practices

Culturally Responsive Support

- Multilingual staff and lived experience are key
- Language access and cultural understanding enhance trust
- Staff should be trained on cultural humility and anti-discrimination laws

Group Discussion Themes

Client Engagement

- Drop-in services and outreach improve access
- Set clear expectations during intakes
- Behavioral health & social services boost engagement
- Collect documents early to maintain momentum

Data Collection

- Most difficult documents: SSN letters, IDs, vital records (especially for those born out-of-state)
- Language barriers complicate data entry
- Landlords sometimes require extensive income documentation
- Staff benefit from clear workflows and supervisory support

Culturally Responsive Care

- Language services are vital, but so is cultural humility
- Shared lived experience helps build rapport
- Discrimination based on medical or financial status is illegal in MA

System Observations

- Housing programs are working, but demand far exceeds supply
- Emergency placement delays are growing
- Staff shortages, funding limits, and insurance loss are key issues
- Agencies should focus not only on housing access, but also on client quality of life

Resources Shared

- Justice for Housing – Housing reentry support for formerly incarcerated individuals
- Skyline Village – Housing units in Quincy
- JRI – HOPWA Program – New housing program launching soon
- Identified need: Assistance for moving costs