



# MASSACHUSETTS HOUSING AND SHELTER ALLIANCE

INITIATING SOLUTIONS TO END HOMELESSNESS

## Interview with Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (ICHH) Executive Director Robert Pulster

### ***What is the rationale for the Article 87 proposal to transfer shelter programs from DTA to DHCD?***

The Patrick Murray Administration is undertaking a comprehensive set of initiatives to reform the Commonwealth's emergency shelter and housing delivery systems. By integrating shelter and housing within a single department it will be easier to identify and address critical gaps in our housing delivery system.

The initiative also advances the recommendations of the Commission to End Homelessness by acknowledging that homelessness is primarily a housing issue. The proposal institutionalizes a Housing First approach, which will reduce reliance on long-term shelter stays.

### ***What is the time frame for the transition?***

The Article 87 was filed on January 28<sup>th</sup> and the Legislature is required to act within 60 days to either support or reject the proposal. If approved the transfer of emergency shelter programs from DTA to DHCD will be effective July 1, 2009. The administration will spend the next 5 months engaging stakeholders in developing an effective operational plan.

### ***How will this transition affect the population served?***

The consolidation of housing and shelter programs within DHCD will advance the administration's goal of eliminating homelessness in the Commonwealth. As a result of the proposed restructuring, residents of the Commonwealth, whether they are facing housing challenges or not, can expect:

- More seamless access to housing services
- More effective use of state resources
- Better coordination and integration of services across systems and programs
- More timely and appropriate service responses at the local level
- Accelerated housing placements with support services
- A reduced need for shelters and the elimination of motels as a last resort for shelter

### ***Based on these changes, what will the homeless system look like in the future?***

The proposal will dramatically change the delivery of services offered to families and individuals that are homeless or at risk of homelessness. By consolidating shelter and housing and making use of best practices demonstrated through the ICHH Regional Network Innovations the Commonwealth will:

- Offer access to services that include a comprehensive assessment and provision of services that conform to the principle of *the right resources to the right people at the right time*
- Provide an expanded array of prevention and diversion resources to assist families and individuals to sustain housing
- Inform the housing production agenda by identifying specific housing supply needs and development opportunities
- Extend the supply of subsidized housing and supportive housing to extremely low income individuals and households