Overview of West Roxbury Shelter Services

MAKING Opportunity COUNT

Introduction

Making Opportunity Count (MOC) is a community action agency dedicated to empowering individuals and families across Massachusetts to achieve economic stability and independence. Each year, we serve more than 30,000 individuals through a comprehensive network of programs, including early education and childcare, workforce development, housing and homelessness services, behavioral health support, nutrition programs, and youth development initiatives. Our work is rooted in eliminating barriers, promoting equity, and building stronger communities.

Who We Are: Making Opportunity Count (MOC)

MOC has become a trusted partner in addressing homelessness. Our shelter programs are built on strong operational practices, successful outcomes, and a steadfast commitment to collaboration with communities. As we expand our services into West Roxbury, we are committed to working alongside local leaders and residents to ensure this shelter becomes a stabilizing, supportive asset to the neighborhood.

MOC has decades of experience operating successful shelter programs in partnership with local communities. Our sites have been recognized by public officials and peer organizations, including walkthroughs by Congresswoman Lori Trahan and visits by organizations such as CTI, Ascentria, and Commonwealth Care Alliance to model their own programs after ours.

At the heart of our approach is individualized care and empowerment. Each family we serve receives comprehensive case management services that focus on addressing barriers to stability and moving families toward long-term housing solutions.

West Roxbury Shelter Project Overview

- **Location:** 5 Redlands Road, West Roxbury
- **Opening Target:** July 2025
- **Capacity:** Up to 48 families
- **Staffing:** 24/7 onsite staffing and security; the site will be supported by a dedicated team including management, case managers, direct care staff, and a full-time maintenance professional assigned to the site.
- **Population:** Families with children and pregnant individuals enrolled in the Commonwealth's Emergency Assistance (EA) program
- **Services Provided:** Intensive case management focused on stabilization, employment, and rapid rehousing; dedicated volunteer-staffed space to support trauma-informed play in collaboration with Horizons for Homeless Children

This site is not adding new capacity to the system but is part of the Commonwealth's strategic shift to transition away from hotels and ensure stable shelter options for families experiencing homelessness.

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Client Profiles:
Stories of Resilience and Success

At MOC shelters, families find not only a safe place to stay, but a pathway forward. A few examples of the individuals we have supported include:

- **Building a New Beginning**: A mother of three entered one of our shelters after fleeing domestic violence while struggling with postpartum depression. With intensive support from our case management and direct care teams, she regained her mental health, secured stable employment, and is now preparing to move into a subsidized apartment where she and her children will thrive.
- **Preventing a Return to Homelessness:** A family at risk of shelter exit without stable housing was able to remain safely sheltered after MOC negotiated a bridge lease extension just two days before their exit date. This rapid intervention prevented them from re-entering homelessness and preserved the family's stability.
- **Workforce Integration:** Through our partnerships, including with Wachusett Mountain and Concord Public Schools, many of our shelter clients have secured meaningful employment. For example, a group of residents with construction backgrounds were connected with a local painting company, resulting in immediate job offers and financial independence.

Community Safety and Impact

- **Security:** All MOC shelters are staffed 24/7 with professional security procedures tailored to each site.
- **Police and Fire Partnerships:** We collaborate closely with local police and fire departments, who provide regular safety checks, fire drills, community education workshops, and rapid response when needed.
- **Crime Impact:** There has been no increase in crime following the opening of our shelters. In Gardner, police and EMTs reported a decrease in overdose-related calls after MOC transitioned a hotel into family shelter use.

Proven Outcomes and Community Contribution

- **Housing Stability:** 78% of families exiting MOC shelters transition successfully into stable, permanent housing, with a current fiscal year-to-date success rate of 88%.
- **Employment:** 34% of active adult shelter clients are employed during their shelter stay, thanks in part to our partnerships with local employers.
- **Community Engagement:** Families are connected to summer camps, afterschool programs, libraries, museums, and job training programs, ensuring they are active contributors to their new communities.

Commitment to Partnership and Local Engagement

We recognize the importance of ongoing dialogue with the community. Our commitments for the West Roxbury site include:

- Establishing a Community Advisory Group for local feedback and collaboration.
- Providing a dedicated point of contact for neighborhood concerns, questions, and ideas.
- Participating in regular meetings with neighborhood associations and community leaders to ensure operations are transparent, responsive, and aligned with local priorities.

Conclusion

We understand that welcoming a shelter into a neighborhood raises important questions and concerns. Making Opportunity Count is committed to operating the West Roxbury shelter with the highest standards of care, transparency, and community partnership. We are honored to work alongside the West Roxbury community to support families in crisis and to build stronger, safer neighborhoods for all.

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