



MASSACHUSETTS

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Like other communities across the state, the Town of Sharon was notified in September that the state Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities would be renting rooms at local hotels as long-term, temporary housing for migrant families.

As of Oct. 17, there are currently 15 families in hotel rooms in Sharon and more possibly expected.

The families come from Chile, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, as well as within the US.

Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey declared a state of emergency this summer as the number of arriving migrant families in Massachusetts sharply increased and the existing Emergency Shelter program was overwhelmed.

Massachusetts has a “right to shelter” law for families with children and pregnant women, which means that shelter must be provided under the law. To be eligible, individuals have legally entered the US.

More than 90 municipalities across Massachusetts are hosting homeless families, according to Gov. Healey's office.

The state covers the cost of emergency shelter services for eligible families, including eligible costs for education, food assistance, medical care and other basic needs. Those costs are borne by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and MassHealth.

National Guard personnel have been deployed to assist with the response at the Sharon shelter site.

A task force of representatives from town departments including schools, health and public safety as well as Sharon nonprofits and faith-based organizations is organizing to coordinate emergency assistance and services to these families and welcome them to Sharon.

Thirteen children have been registered in the Sharon Public Schools.

“We have enthusiastically welcomed the new children and their families to our schools. Just this morning, I had the opportunity to meet six great new high school students who seemed grateful for the support offered and eager to settle into school life,” said Peter Botelho, Superintendent of Schools. “Assistant Superintendent Dr. Meg Dussault has been working tirelessly to spearhead our efforts to collaborate with community members and local and state agencies, support our new families and get students registered and into their classrooms.”

It is not known how long the families will be in Sharon, as the statewide and nationwide situation is evolving, and a critical shortage of shelter beds is ongoing.

The Healey administration also launched a website available at this link providing shelter placement data, listed by municipality, which it said would be updated daily.

How you can help

Many Sharon community organizations, houses of worship and individuals have expressed eagerness to help and plans are underway to coordinate these efforts.

At present, residents are asked to hold off making any more physical donations until needs can be better assessed and specific drives organized.

“We are grateful for the outpouring of community support to help meet basic needs for these families,” Town Administrator Frederic Turkington said. “As we determine specific needs and the aspirations of these families, we will share more information how residents can be of assistance.”

A town fund has been established to raise monies for needs such as laundry costs and other essentials.

Checks made payable to the Town of Sharon with memo stating “donation - new families” can be dropped off at or mailed to the Town Administrator’s Office, Town Offices, 90 S. Main St., or the Fire Department, 211 S. Main St.

Residents are asked to respect the privacy of these new residents and not directly visit or drop off donations.

“Thank you everyone for reaching out and being so willing to welcome our newest residents into our community,” Health Department Administrator/Public Health Nurse Leandra McLean said. “The outpouring has been tremendous, and we will need all of it, as we look to welcome our new residents.”

Updates on the situation and families’ needs will be posted on the [Migrant/Homeless Families in Sharon page](#) on the town website, townofsharon.net.

For further information contact Assistant Superintendent Meg Dussault at mdussault@sharonschools.net.

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