

You Find Your Strength



A guide for women who are homeless,
by women who are or have been homeless
in Cambridge and Somerville

Contributors

In 2007 and 2008, women who were homeless or had been homeless met together in Cambridge and Somerville, Massachusetts at On The Rise, Heading Home, St. Patrick's Shelter, the YWCA in Cambridge, and Susan Duley House to share their stories and create a guidebook that would help other women facing homelessness. During one of the meetings a woman reflected on what she had learned and said, "you find your strength".

The art was created by women in the Wednesday art class at On The Rise led by Carol and the art class at Heading Home.

It is our hope that this small book with its offer of support, wisdom, and practical advice will help other women who are facing homelessness find their strength, feel less alone, and realize new things in their lives.

Participant Initials

A, PA, JB, TB, JB, AD, EF, MF, AG, JH, JI, J, CM, KM, MM, N, CR, MS, S, DP, P, V, FW, GW, OW, BZ, Z.

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Contact us at: YouFindYourStrength@gmail.com or visit us on Facebook

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On the day I became homeless...

"I was on a bus. I had my bags, and couldn't stop crying. Another homeless woman saw me, told me where to go, what to do for clothes, food, medicine. The only way you find out what to do next is through someone else in the same situation. When I was at my lowest, she didn't know me, but she knew how I felt. You need a kind voice when you feel like you can't sink any lower. She was like an angel."

On that first night of homelessness...

"You should know that other people have been in your shoes":

"I felt like a walking Job"

"I felt alone"

"I didn't feel worthy; it's hard to feel like you matter"

"Life can turn around in minutes. I had a job, a house, my health – then I lost all of it."

"You start feeling more alienated, more isolated, totally separate."

"You see people going into restaurants and it's like a separate reality"

"In the beginning, I was afraid, scared to death all the time. I was numb and emotionally treading water"

"I was crying all the time"

"It's a struggle"

"There's no light."

"I wanted someone to take me seriously"

There's a different story for everyone

"On that first night of homelessness, you can feel so numb. Sometimes, the only question you can think of: how did this happen to me? "This is something I never dreamed I'd experience"

"Once you become homeless, you know that no one kind of person fits the description. Maybe you lost your job, you got sick, you left a violent boyfriend, you're working but can't afford rent, you lost someone close, you're fighting addiction, you just immigrated, you're older..."

"We're all homeless for different reasons, but we're all going through the same thing."





Addiction

"Addiction – that's the real reason I lost everything."

"My daughter kicked me out because my boyfriend was smoking crack."

"I had a relapse, and got thrown out of my sober house."

Grief

"I lost my mother. Everything else followed"

Immigration

"My husband wouldn't take me in. I supported him, had his children, but when he left to study in the US, I followed but he didn't want me anymore."

"I couldn't afford rent, but I didn't want to be dependent on anyone. Here, I can save my paychecks, enough to get an apartment someday."

Still working, but homeless

"I work at stores all over Boston, Cambridge – so I can work as many hours as I can – but I still can't afford rent."

Section eight housing is hard to keep

"There are so many rules, so many ways to lose your place – if you have a lot of people over, if you make noise, have drugs, alcohol...I lost my place after just six months."

Prison

"I got out of jail for a DUI and was sober but had no place to go but the shelter"

Lost job

"The hospital I was working at shut down..."

Illness

"I was diagnosed with cancer. I couldn't work at the same time, so I lost my job. Then things just got worse."

"My daughter wants me to come back, but I'm sick, I don't want to be a burden."

Relationships

"I had to leave that relationship – it was wearing me down. But I didn't have anywhere I could stay."

My Finances

"I stopped opening my bills when I couldn't pay them. I lost my apartment when I got behind in rent"



Advice for getting through the first days

"One of the best things you can do for yourself: don't be alone. I found the kind souls, and the strong ones – you don't want to be too open, but find people who will support you."

"I didn't get any advice – the police just told me, you've got to move. But I wish I had gotten advice."

"Figure out who to trust: watch, see which ones leave the shelter and are trying to make it out, and then follow them."

"You'll be scared – but try to keep listening, look around – maybe someone will come to you and extend a hand."

"Know that it's not that I'm stupid. I just did stupid things, I can't be judged by my past."

"Pray a lot. Believing in a higher power helps."

"Feel worthy."

"Come to terms with this new reality."

"Believe in yourself – that's really big. Even being in a shelter, you can still do positive things."

Things You Will Miss

Control:

"Staying in bed for a morning, choosing your meals, choosing who you spend the night with..."

Space:

"Your own, enough, a place where you can keep your things..."

Love:

"Your pet, regular contact with friends and family..."

Dignity:

"When you are carrying your possessions you are automatically stigmatized."

Respect:

"When people hear you are homeless they become judgmental and mean."

The struggle of navigating the system was described by a woman as going through the labyrinth.

Advice for getting through the first days

"I wish the question I was comfortable asking was: Can you help me? Even at the dinner table it was hard for me to ask: 'can you pass the rolls'? I was raised to be independent."

"Take this as a time to better yourself, to reflect."

"It's key to keep the focus on yourself, and on your goals"

"Set small goals and build on them"

"Get strong people in your corner"

"When you get angry, don't lose your temper – remember what you could lose, what's at stake, like a shelter bed"

"Keep a sense of humor – that gets me through each day"

"You don't choose to be homeless – the situation chooses you. But then you have to make smart choices"

"If you're feeling down and discouraged and don't feel as if you're getting results, don't give up. There are organizations there to serve you – try to get them to respond to you. Try not to take offense – get what you need. There is always someone to talk to"

Where Can I Go for Help?

Here are some places women have recommended...

Multi Service Center

362 Green Street
Cambridge
617-349-6340

Staff here can help you find answers to questions.

LIFT

Cambridge and Somerville Offices
c/o Family Center
366 Somerville Ave. (Union Square)
617-591-9400

Roxbury Office
Vines Community Center
339 Dudley
617-427-1155

St. Francis House

39 Boylston St.
Boston
617-542-4211

There is a women's program 617-654-1234 on the second floor.

Rosie's Place

889 Harrison Ave.
Boston
617-442-9322





The Shelters

How Can I Find A Shelter?

“ There are some brilliant women in the shelters...there’s a different story for everyone”

“ Some people are volatile”

“ It’s hard to put so many women together”

“ Stay out of the mix, out of the drama. Don’t take things too personally. After a while, you see who to steer clear of, who’s not going anywhere”

“ I thank God that there is a shelter. I could be on the street”

“ The staff have no training and often flip out. I want to tell them that yelling is not OK”

“ Staff are underpaid and have their own issues”

“ Staff might pick power struggle fights”

“ Staff can bar you arbitrarily. Know what the resources are if you get barred and call First Step”

There are many places that can help you get into a shelter. The Multi Service Center will search for a place for you, as will staff at Rosie’s. You can ask staff at Drop In Centers, staff at clinics, churches, and probation officers. Here is a list of some shelters. Unless noted, all provide dinner. All small shelters are sober shelters. Clients of DMH might be eligible for DMH Shelters

Small Shelters

St Patrick’s: (20 shelter beds and 10 transitional spaces)

270 Washington St.

Somerville

617-628-3015

To get a bed there, arrive at the shelter by 3pm.

(Bus 91 from Central Square or Bus 86 from Harvard Square)

If there are too many women there will be a lottery.

Those who do not get a bed will be driven back to Central Square.

“ I’ve been all over – this is the cleanest, safest, friendliest”

“ Women here are trying to get on with their lives”

“ I feel safe here. The people are decent”

“ Women at this shelter lean on each other”

“ Possessions are thrown out and women get barred if they try to get them from the dumpster. Medications have been thrown out. Keep them with you”

“ It is restrictive, like being in prison, what the staff says goes”

Safe Haven: (7 beds for women)

15 Newbury St., Boston

(Church basement) Can stay up to 2 years.

617-927-0077

Small Shelters - continued

Heading Home (6 women)

109 School St. - Cambridge
617-547-1885

Need to have a referral advocate call Shelter Inc at exactly 10 AM, and you need to be with them. A worker at Multi Service Center will call for you if you go there before 10AM. This often takes many tries as there are only a few beds for women.

"It's very hard to get into, though"

Santa Maria (10 women)

11 Waltham St. - Boston
617-423-4366

Call at 7AM to see if beds are available. First time guests need to have an advocate call to refer them. May stay 10 consecutive nights, can return after 30 days away. Opens at 7pm and does not provide dinner. Women can eat at Pine Street or Rosie's first. Rosie's provides a van to Santa Maria after the meal.

Rosie's Place (20 women)

889 Harrison Ave. - Boston
617-442-9322

Go there between 7:30-8AM Monday-Friday, 10am Sat., Sun for lottery for a bed. Limited stay of 21 days. Need to stay out two weeks before returning.

Queen of Peace (7 women)

401 Quincy St. - Dorchester
617-288-4182

Call 8-9AM or 12-1PM to see if beds are available. Women can stay for three weeks. From Fields Corner take bus #17 to Bowdoin and Quincy St.



Further Away or Seasonal Shelters

Harvard Square Shelter at the University Lutheran Church

Cambridge
617-547-2841 or 855-367-2353

Call at 7:30am to reserve a bed. Call at 9:30pm for a bed for 1 night. Shelter is open November 15 to April 15 and is run by Harvard students.

"They try to help you. It's run by students, so in a way it's frustrating, they're younger, you know more than them about life. But the shelter is clean, safe, you can do your laundry, they'll cook for you—it's a good place to lay your head down"

College Avenue Shelter (4 women, 12 men)

14 Chapel St. - Somerville
617-623-2546

One block from Davis Square Red line T stop. Shelter is two blocks from the T, they will give you directions. Call anytime to see if bed is available, leave a message and a phone number where you can be reached. You can get a bed on weekends too. Call at least one time a week, every time you call you get a check mark and this interest gives you some priority.

Bristol Lodge (12 women)

205 Bacon St. - Waltham
781-893-0108

Call in the morning. An intake interview will be done at the men's shelter, 27 Lexington St. Waltham. You can stay 3 or more months. Get the 70 or 70A bus at Green & Magazine St. to Waltham.

Lynn Emergency Shelter (10 women)

781-581-6600

You can stay 1 month or more. Call to see if there is a bed and to get directions.

Big Shelters

CASPAR Albany Street Shelter (9 women) 240 Albany St., Cambridge 617-661-0600. This is a shelter for active substance users from Somerville and Cambridge. However, they will allow anyone to stay 1 night.

"It can be a mess—but it's a place to go when you're drunk."

"It's the best wet shelter."

Pine Street (70 women)

363 Albany St.

Boston

617-521-7189

Go before 3:15pm to put your name in the lottery. Names of those getting a bed are called at 3:30pm.

"Upstairs is not bad."

Woods Mullen also called **Intake** (60 women)

(Boston Medical Center)

794 Mass Ave. Rear

Boston

617-534-7100

In cold weather months you can go anytime to see if a bed is available. The shelter is open 24 hours in cold weather. In Spring you need to be there by 3pm to get a bed on first come basis.

"The shelter isn't nice but the staff is good."

Shattuck Shelter (185 beds / 24 for women)

Shattuck Hospital

170 Morton St.

Jamaica Plain

617-892-7917

Be there at 6pm for lottery. If they do not have space they will help find another shelter.

What if I Don't Get in a Shelter or I Get the X?



Some shelters hold lotteries if they don't have enough beds. If you don't get a shelter bed and it is after hours in Cambridge you can call the First Step Van 617-592-6895. They will come as soon as possible and transport you to a shelter. Some women have also suggested South Station as a safe place that will usually allow a woman to remain overnight. Hospital Emergency Rooms might also provide a one time place to stay safe.

" I pulled the X, I panicked"
" Who would take an X for you? I would do it in a heartbeat if I could"
" If all other options are impossible, try a police station"
" To stay safe during the day, I hide in a gentrified neighborhood".
" Safety matters – on the streets, you can get sexually abused... try to stay in the shelters"

Where Can I Get Legal Help?

Cambridge Somerville Legal Services 617-603-2700

Greater Boston Legal Services 617-371-1234

Community Legal Services 617-661-1010

1 West St., Cambridge

Harvard Legal Aid Bureau 617-495-4408

23 Everett St., Cambridge

Community Legal Assistance

Services Project (CLASP) 617-349-6340

Cambridge Multi Service Center, 362 Green Street, Cambridge

Free drop-in legal clinic for people who are homeless.

Tuesdays 8:30–11:30am

SPAN Inc. 617-423-0750

105 Chauncy St., 6th floor, Boston

Assistance and support for those who were incarcerated

Where Can I Go During the Day?

Drop In, Lunch, & Day Programs

“Remember—churches, libraries, coffeeshops.”

Women’s Drop In at Heading Home

109 School St. - Central Square - Cambridge
617-547-1885

Open to all women M–F 9:30am–2:30pm. Hot lunch, TV room, free phone, clothing, shower. Just ring the bell outside.

On The Rise

341 Broadway - Cambridge
617-497-7968

For women who are clients of their outreach program and through referrals. Open Mon, Tue, Thu, and Sat 8am–2pm (Saturday schedule is prone to changes); Wed and Fri until 4pm. Access to phones, kitchen, clothing, computer, advocacy services. Clients may receive mail there. Storage bins are available for women who do not have any other place to secure their things.

“My safe haven.”

Salvation Army

402 Mass. Ave. – Central Square – Cambridge
617-547-3400

Open to women and men 8:30am–3:30pm Monday–Friday. Saturday 11:30am–1pm, Sunday 1–3pm. Meal served. Laundry facilities, women’s shower. Free women’s walk-in health clinic 2 times a week. Call for clinic times.

Women’s Center

46 Pleasant St. – near Central Square – Cambridge
617-354-8807

Mon–Fri 10am–8pm, Saturday 10am–1pm. Access to computers. Quiet place.

Youth on Fire

1555 Mass Ave, Cambridge (church basement)
617-661-2508

Drop in program for ages 14–24. Meals, showers. Mon 11am–8pm, Tue 1–6pm, Wed–Fri 11am–6pm.

Drop In, Lunch, & Day Programs - continued

Bread & Jams

Corner of Quincy & Kirkland Streets Basement of Swedenborg Church near Harvard Square. Monday-Friday 9-4.
617-441-3831. Drop in, food, clothing, phones. Homestart housing advocate Monday 9 AM-10:AM, for help with referrals.

Rosie’s Place

889 Harrison Ave. - Boston
617-442-9322

8 AM-5 PM. Advocates to help with wide range of issues and to refer for housing help, benefits, job search, etc. Meals served. Access to phones. Access to computers. Thursday 1:15, lottery for a locker if you have a letter from an advocate about your need for one. Women can receive their mail there. Help obtaining Mass ID the first of every month.

Women’s Lunch Place

67 Newbury St., Boston
617-267-1722

Mon–Sat 7am–2pm. Breakfast 8–10am, lunch 12–2pm. Health services 5 days weekly. Fourth Friday birthday party, and many holiday celebrations.

St Francis House

39 Boylston St. - Boston
617-542-4211

Open every day 7am–3pm. Breakfast 7:30–9, lunch 11:30–1. Sandwiches available at other times. Carolyn Connors Women’s Center is a day program for women only, open Mon–Fri 7am–3pm on the 2nd floor, use of computers, telephones, showers, and a drop-in health clinic. You can have your mail sent there. They provide an unofficial picture ID. Staff can provide information and referral for other issues of homelessness. There is a women’s lounge.

Cambridge Senior Center

806 Mass. Ave. Central Square - Cambridge
617-349-6060. Open Monday 8:30-8. Tuesday-Thursday, 8:30-5, Friday 830-3, Saturday and holidays 8:30-1PM. You must be over 60 years old. You can come to the food pantry if you are 55 and disabled. Breakfast and lunch, computer access, social activities, use of a telephone.

How can I eat well?

Meals in Cambridge

Monday

Mass Ave. Baptist Church

146 Hampshire St. (Inman Sq.) 617-868-4853. 6 pm

Tuesday

First Parish Church

3 Church St., Harvard Sq. (use red side door) 617-876-7772 5:30pm

Wednesday

Salvation Army

402 Mass. Avenue - 617-547-3400. 5 pm

Thursday

Christ Church.

0 Garden St. (across from Common, next to the cemetery). 6pm

Union Baptist

874 Main St. (Central Sq) 617-864-6885. 5-6 pm

St James Episcopal Church

1991 Mass Ave. (Porter Sq.) Women only. 5:45 pm

Friday

Mass Ave. Baptist Church.

146 Hampshire St. (Inman Square) 617-868-4853. 6pm

Saturday

First Korean Church

35 Magazine St. (Central Sq.) 5:30 pm

Every Day

Salvation Army. 402 Mass Ave. 617/547-3400 serves lunch every day with Sunday meal 1-3pm.



Meals In Boston:

Rosie's Place. 889 Harrison Ave.

Has dinner every night from 4:30–6pm. Lunch 11:30am. There is also a food pantry Tue–Fri 8:30–11:30am and Mon–Fri 4:30–6:30pm. Pick your own items.

Project Bread Hotline: 1 800-645-8333 can help you locate an evening meal location near you. In addition to the programs listed above, dinners are served at various localities.

Food Pantries:

Project Bread Hotline. 1 800- 645-8333. Mon –Fri. 8 AM-7 PM. They will help you locate a food pantry near you and give you hours of operation and any rules that pantry may have. They will also give info on applying for food stamps.

Food Pantries in Cambridge

CEOC. 11 Inman St. (Behind Cambridge City Hall, Central Sq.) 617-868-2900. Monday & Wednesday 4–6pm, Tuesday 12–2pm, Thursday 11–1pm. Must be Cambridge resident or homeless.

Margaret Fuller House. 71 Cherry St. rear door. 617-547-4680. Wed 5–7:30pm, Thu 1–4pm, Fri & Sat 9am–12noon. Near Heading Home Women's drop-in.

St. Paul's AME Church. 85 Bishop Allen Dr. 617/661-1110. Wednesdays 12–2pm, Saturday 10–12noon.

Cambridge Senior Center. 806 Mass Ave. (next to YMCA) for people 55 and older. Tuesday 2–4 & Thursday, 12–2pm.

Food Stamps

“You can’t buy cooked food or sandwiches with food stamps, even at the grocery stores.”

Call Project Bread 1-800-645-8333 to find out if you are eligible for food stamps. They can help you obtain an application and refer you for help applying. They will tell you which DTA (welfare) office you should go to.

How Can I Stay Connected?

Getting Mail

You can usually get mail at the shelter where you are staying, however Rosie’s Place, St Francis House, and On The Rise will accept and hold mail. They provide a safe and secure way to get your mail even if you move from shelter to shelter. This way important information about housing etc. won’t get lost.

On The Rise, 341 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139 617-497-7968

Rosie’s Place, 889 Harrison Ave. Boston, MA 02118 617-442-9322

St. Francis House, 39 Boylston St. Boston, MA 02116 617-542-4211

Voice Mail

Community Voice Mail offers voice mail boxes through several agencies—Rosie’s Place, Women’s Lunch, On The Rise, and Heading Home are a few. Check to see if they have a voice mailbox available.

Cell Phones

Safelink wireless lifeline provides free cellphone monthly minutes. To qualify you must receive some kind of government assistance (food stamps, mass health, etc.). You must have a valid mailing address where the US postal service can deliver mail and a cellphone. A US post office box is acceptable. To get information and to apply on line go to www.safelinkwireless.com.

Getting Around

MBTA T Pass. People with disabilities or over 65 are eligible for reduced fares. Pick up an application at the Charlie Card Store located in Downtown Crossing Station M–F 8am–5:30pm. You can also download the application on the MBTA website or call 617-222-3200 to have one mailed to you. If you have Medicare you do not need further verification. Otherwise any licensed health provider can fill it in and mail it back. Health Care for the Homeless can help. When you receive approval, go to the Charlie Card Store with an ID to get your card.

First Step Van. The First Step Van may be able to transport you in an emergency: 617-592-6895.



Computers, Telephones and Email

Having an email address can keep you in touch. Many places provide access and some can help you set up your own email address.

Bread and Jams, St Francis House, On The Rise, Women’s Drop In, Rosie’s Place, Women’s Center, Cambridge Senior Center listed under Day Programs all have access to phones or computers. Here are some more places...

Cambridge Public Library All branches offer computer access with a library card. You need a shelter letter or proof of address and 2 IDs (not picture) to get a card. Main Library Broadway M-Thur 9-9., Fri- Sat 9-5, Sun 1-5.

Boston Public Library. All branches offer computer access with a library card. You need a picture ID to get a library card to use the computers. You need an address and ID to get a card which allows you to take books out.

Heading Home. 109 School St. Cambridge Telephone for local calls. The phone is located to give you some privacy.

Multi Service Center. 362 Green St., Cambridge. Time-limited phone, not very private. Monday 8:30am–8pm, Tuesday–Thursday 8:30am–5pm, Friday 8:30am–12noon.

Women’s Lunch Place. 617-267-1722. 67 Newbury St. Boston. Open from 7:00 am - 2:00 pm. Phones and computers are available.



How Do I Find Housing?

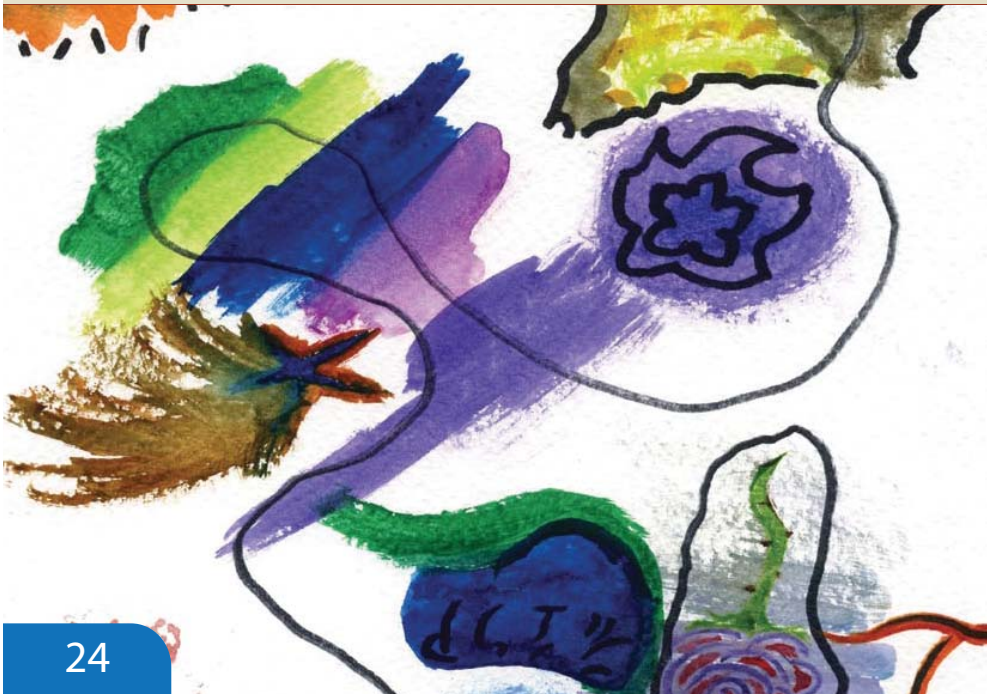
“Hurry up and wait! but don’t get discouraged”.

“There is a lot of paperwork”.

“I worked my butt off”.

“The waiting is hard. Waiting and waiting can drive you crazy”.

“Get help with legal issues. An advocate can help. If you were in jail it is not necessarily a barrier to getting housing”.



Housing Assistance

Housing Advocate Agencies provide assistance with applications and provide other supports to help you find housing. They can assist or refer you for help with jobs, benefits, IDs, birth certificates, moving-in costs, and furniture once you find a place. They help to keep track of applications and often have information about special housing opportunities.

Homestart. Boston Office. 105 Chauncy St. 617-542-0338. Referrals from shelters. Ask at whatever shelter or day program in Boston you go to for a referral to Homestart. Walk-in hours Wednesday 3–5pm.

ABCD Housing Department. 178 Tremont St. 2nd floor. 617.348-6347. Call to join a housing workshop or housing search group.

Homestart. Cambridge Office. 552 Mass. Ave. Suite 208A 617-234-5340 provides housing services for single people who are homeless in Cambridge. Appointments can be arranged for women in Cambridge shelters (this includes St. Patrick’s), Cambridge transitional programs and some residential treatment programs. The Cambridge office also holds walk in hours every Thursday from 3 PM-6 PM. Anyone can receive help with housing during those hours.

Somerville Homeless Coalition. 1 Davis Square, basement. 617-623-6111. St Patrick’s guests and other homeless people and families from Somerville can use their services.

Multi Service Center. 362 Green St. Cambridge. 617-349-6340. Housing Advocacy with special services if you are an elder or have a disability. They also help you if you are a single person or family staying in Cambridge in a shelter or transitional housing. Call for an appointment.

Housing Works. Provides a housing search website. To access this site, go to www.housingworks.net. For printable instructions on using the site, click on Applicants: Search/Apply Services. To search the site, click on Enter and then on Housing Works.

Housing - continued

MBHP Housing Consumer Education Center. 125 Lincoln St. 5th floor, Boston (near South Station). 617-425-6700. 9-5 PM, Mon-Fri. Tues. until 7 PM. Access to phones, computers, and printers for housing searches. Information on housing resources. counselors available. Call or walk in.

Boston Housing Authority. 52 & 56 Chauncy St. Boston (Downtown Crossing). You can pick up applications at 56 Chauncy St. To check on the your application and wait list status call 617-988-4200. Homelessness is a priority status and you need to have your shelter or advocate fill in their homeless verification form and return it with your application.

Cambridge Housing Authority. 675 Massachusetts Ave. (Central Square) 2nd fl. 617-864-3020. Walk in to pick up applications. You can call to find out your position on the CHA lists, and to make sure you have an active application.

Cambridge Housing Authority has priorities for Cambridge residents, people who work in Cambridge, or have some essential connection to Cambridge. Homelessness is not a priority. If you are at a Cambridge shelter or use a Cambridge address this will help you.

Somerville Housing Authority. 30 Memorial Rd. Somerville. 617-625-1152. If you are staying at a Somerville shelter or have been a resident of Somerville you might have a priority here. Call to make an appointment or stop by to get applications.. Mon, Tue, Wed 8-4. Th 8-7PM, Fri 8-noon.

The Bay State Banner. Newspaper distributed free to churches, sidewalk boxes, CVS and Walgreens in Boston. This paper lists affordable housing opportunities when applications are being taken. 617-261-4600. Access The Bay State Banner at www.baystatebanner.com and click on real estate to get affordable housing listings and rentals.

"Most people lose their place on waiting lists because they move around and don't get notices in time. Try to have a consistent mailing address that you can check at a day program you always go to or where your advocate is so that she can look out for your mail. If you change your address notify the housing agency immediately so your mail will follow you."

Women Veteran's Housing Services

There are almost 28,000 women veterans in Massachusetts. The Veterans Administration has a program for women veterans and their children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Call Lauren Dever at 857-364-4027 for information about intensive case management, help with housing, or clinical services. There is a transitional housing program for single women veterans, too.

Veteran's Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255 has 24/7 coverage.

New England Center for Homeless Veterans 617-248-9400
17 Court St., Boston

Has up to 16 beds for women veterans. Length of stay is decided individually.

Cambridge Veterans' Services 617-349-4761

51 Inman St., 2nd floor, Cambridge

Monday 8am-8pm, Tuesday-Thursday 8am-5pm, Friday 8am-noon

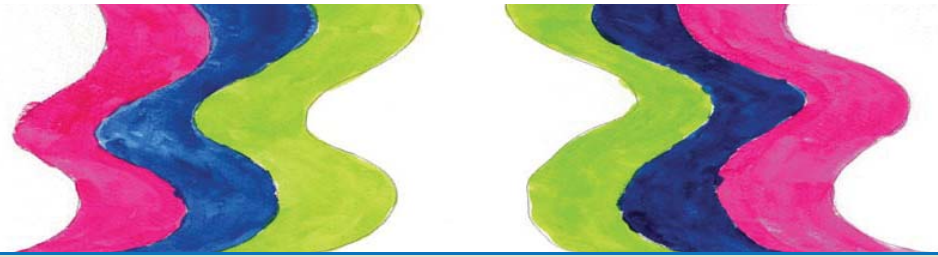
If you are a spouse of a veteran you may be eligible for benefits. Call for information. Confidentiality is maintained in the case of domestic violence.

Women Veteran's Network 617-210-5958, 617-210-5779

Websites for more resources and activities:

www.mass.gov/veterans

www.massvetsadvisor.org



How Can I Keep Myself Looking Good?

How Can I Keep My Possessions Safe?

“What we have isn’t much, but it makes a big difference. If they would stop tossing our stuff it would make us feel more secure.”

“It’s a terrible feeling to have your things thrown out.”

Storage

Some of the shelters offer lockers or limited storage space for personal belongings while you are staying there. There are rules about what can be left in the shelters during the day and some shelters “toss” items that are left out or still there if you no longer stay there. Check with staff and other residents so you don’t lose your things.

Women who go to Rosie’s Place or On the Rise may be able to get some storage there if they have no other options.

There are some storage companies that offer small storage spaces. Here is a short list, but you can check yellow pages for others. Some of the U Haul lockers are upper level and you need to push a moving stair to access them. Private storage is expensive. Be sure you can budget the monthly fees.

U-Haul - 844 Main St. Cambridge (Central Sq.)
617-354-0500. 4x4x4foot lockers. You need to purchase a special padlock. These lockers cost about \$50/monthly. 4X4X6 foot costs \$80 monthly.

U-Haul - 985 Mass. Ave. Boston
617-442-5600. Same as U-Haul - Cambridge.

Metropolitan - 134 Mass Ave., Cambridge
617-547-8180 Larger space, 5x7x10 \$80 Monthly.

“How you dress and look matters, you are treated according to what you are wearing.”

“Others can be judgmental.”

“If you are carrying your possessions you are automatically stigmatized.”

Clothing

Day programs such as Heading Home, Women’s Lunch, St. Francis House, Bread and Jams, and On the Rise all have clothing programs. Ask at the day program. The American Friends’ Service Committee, CASPAR’s GEAR Program, and Solutions Wear all provide clothing, but you need a referral and appointment. Ask your housing advocate, case manager, or staff at shelters and drop-ins to help you with a referral.

Some of the evening meals also have clothing available.

Some of the shelters and day drop-ins have small toiletries and soaps that are given out for free.

You can shower and do laundry at On The Rise (if you are a client) or at Women’s Lunch Place. The shelters have showers and most have laundry although there are restrictions about what day you can do laundry.

“Having a shower everyday means everything.”

What About Working?

"It's tough to find a job without a permanent address. You have to work around shelter and drop-in schedules."

"You can't maintain your job if you don't maintain your appearance."

"You need an address."

Employment, Training, & Classes

LIFT

Cambridge and Somerville Office. 366 Somerville Ave (Union Sq., Somerville) 617-591-9400. Roxbury Office. 339 Dudley St, Boston. 617-427-1155.

They will help you with employment, resume writing, and computer job search. Also with applying for benefits, obtaining IDs, job readiness programs, tax preparation, housing search, and other services as needed.

Community Learning Center. 5 Western Ave, Central Sq. Cambridge Offers computer instruction, GED classes, and English as a Second Language for people who are homeless or in transitional housing. Call Deb Foxx 617-349-6363.

St Francis House. 39 Boylston St. Boston. 617- 654-1257 has two programs to help people prepare for employment. The First Step Program is a one-week program given in English and Spanish. The Moving Ahead Program is 14 weeks and includes counseling, job search and a small stipend. You can get more information and apply for Moving Ahead on the 4th floor, and to First Step on the 3rd floor. Also offer Next Step programs.

Employment, Training, & Classes - continued

Career Centers:

Computers available for job search, and other help for women seeking jobs. Fill out a form to become a member. Services are free. Each center may vary in what they offer. Stop in or call:

Career Source. 186 Alewife Parkway, (Alewife Red line T Stop) Cambridge. 617-661-7867. (Press 0 for information)

Workplace:

29 Winter St. Boston (Downtown Crossing) 4th floor. 617-737-0093 (stay on the line) In addition to job search, and classes they have Project TEAM, a program with extra services for people who are homeless.

Job Net

210 South St., Boston 617-338-0809.

Boston Career Link

1010 Harrison Ave. Boston. 617-536 -1888.

Spare Change News

1151 Mass Ave (Church basement) Cambridge. 617-497-1595 Stop by or call about selling the newspaper on the street.

Cambridge Employment Program. 51 Inman St., Cambridge. 617-349-6166. Employment counseling for Cambridge residents including the homeless. Stop in for an application and appointment.

There are other employment and training programs where you need a referral. If you are interested in finding something else ask through day programs, housing advocates, the Multi Service Center in Cambridge, and other case managers.

How Can I Apply for Benefits ?

“Welfare changed its name to DTA, how can you know”?

“Find providers who will help you with your paperwork”.

“Regular doctors don't have time. Health Care for the Homeless nurses understand and will keep submitting and resubmitting for approval”.

PATH Program. Path Program has outreach specialists in many shelters, day programs and housing advocate agencies. They can help you apply for Social Security benefits and will support you through the process. You can access them through various programs or call 781-734-2025.

Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)

To apply for EAEDC benefits and food stamps together you need to show that you are unable to work at this time due to a disability or age (65 years). As part of the application process you must show that you have applied for benefits at a Social Security Office. The Department of Transitional Assistance also has programs for families with dependent children, family shelters, food stamps and emergency assistance.

Cambridge and Somerville Residents

Cambridge and Somerville residents are now served by the Chelsea Office, 80 Everett Ave., Chelsea 617-551-1700. Take the T to Haymarket, transfer to the 111 bus to Everett Ave., and walk. The Chelsea Office also has workers at CAAS, 66-70 Union Sq., Somerville on Wednesdays to process new applications. Call 617-623-1392 for an appointment. Boston residents use either Dudley Sq. Office, 2201 Washington St., Roxbury 617-989-6000, or Newmarket Sq. Office, 1010 Mass Ave., Boston 617-989-2200. For information about applying, call 1-800-249-2007.



Applying for Social Security Benefits

Social Security Disability (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). You can apply for either of these benefits at a local Social Security Office. If you are homeless when you apply, be sure you let them know. Have a list of all your doctors, clinics, Health Care for the Homeless providers, mental health providers, as well as a list of any medications you take. Often benefits are denied at first. It is important to appeal and to find out why you were denied so you can get additional information to help your application.

It is helpful to have a case manager assist you with the application process. You can give Social Security or DTA the name of your case manager or of someone else you trust who can receive mail relating to your case. If you move around, they will be able to let you know about necessary appointments or deadlines.

Boston

Social Security Office, 10 Causeway Street, 1st floor, Boston (near TD Banknorth Garden, formerly Fleet Center, no station stop)

Cambridge & Somerville

Social Security Office, 10 Fawcett Street, Cambridge (after Concord Ave. rotary, #78 bus, upper level Red Line Harvard T stop)

Other locations call 1-800-772-1213 with your zip code to find the right office.

There are many agencies that will help you apply for benefits. If you don't have someone to help, ask at any of the day programs. You can also ask housing advocates, mental health providers, and primary health providers. Health Care for the Homeless providers are good resources. Ask the shelter staff or the Multi Service Center staff to direct you to someone who can help.



Applying for Health Insurance

Hospitals have offices to help you apply for health insurance, You can also ask a case manager or health care provider for an application.

“Try to keep your Mass Health, even if you have a job, because you don’t know how long the job will last.”

“ Get Mass Health and keep it”!

Cambridge Health Alliance Patient Helpline. 1-877-637-2273.

Call for help applying for health insurance. They will tell you where you can apply and what information and documents you will need to apply. Staff speak English, Haitian Creole, Portuguese and Spanish.

Mass Health Customer Service. 1-800-841-2900.

Call to get forms and for help applying. Staff speak English and Spanish. You can download the Medical Benefit Request Form in English and Spanish at www.mass.gov/masshealth.

Health Care for All Health Helpline. 1-800-272-4232.

Call for help over the phone with applications for Mass Health, Commonwealth Care, and free care-Safety Net. They provide general health care information, legal help with appeals, and tips on getting through the health system.

How Can I Get Health Care?

“They’ll do what you need- but you have to go to them.”

“The emergency room is a bandaid, if that much, you still have to wait 13 hours, you still get billed.”

“The nurses help.”

“We know our bodies best. I know when something is wrong.”

“Sometimes we don’t care for ourselves as well as we would care for a friend.”

“Its hard to accept help and feel discouragement and its hard to get bad news then face the run around but if you ignore it-it’s not helping matters”.

Cambridge Health Care for the Homeless

Clinics at CASPAR shelter at 240 Albany St. in Cambridge, Salvation Army at 402 Mass. Ave. in Cambridge, Bread & Jams at 50 Quincy St. in Cambridge, and St. Patrick’s shelter at 270 Washington St. in Somerville, and street outreach. Call 617-591-6765 for dental and medical clinic times or 617-591-6731 for women’s clinic.

Boston Health Care for the Homeless

Clinics at 780 Albany Street in Boston. Walk in Mon, Wed, Thursday, Friday 8:30-4PM. Tuesday 8:30-12 noon. You can also call to make an appointment. 857-654-1000 x1605.

Cambridge Health Alliance. There are many neighborhood health centers and specialty care. Talk with a health Care for the Homeless provider for a referral or call 617-665-1305.

HIV

"Anybody who is using actively or who has been with one or more people should be tested. I thought that I was being safe enough, but I wasn't. It's good to maintain your health on the street-it's bad enough out there, never mind getting sick"

" If you are ready to take medications, take them properly"

AIDS Action Hotline. 1-800-235-2331. Call to find a testing site near you Mon - Th - 9:00 am - 8:00 pm or Fri - 9:00 am - 5:00 pm. Testing will be confidential. You can also call the **Hepatitis Hotline.** 1-888-443-4372 for information about hepatitis.

BMC Project Trust. 721 Mass. Avenue, Boston, Rapid HIV testing on Mon-Fri 9:00 am - 4:00 pm 617-414-4495

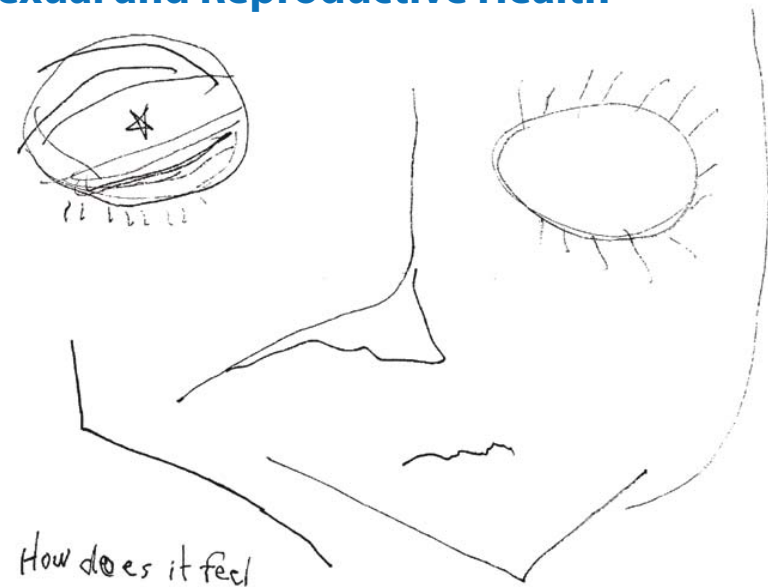
AIDS Action (formerly Cambridge Cares About Aids) 359 Green Street, Cambridge. 617-661-3040. Case management to help with housing, legal issues, mental health, and transportation. There is a needle exchange 617-599-0246, Mon-Fri 11am-5pm. Sterile needles are available.

Boston Living Center. 29 Stanhope St, Boston. 617-236-1012. There are many services to help people with HIV become and stay healthy. To become a member you need a letter from you provider stating your HIV status, income verification, and a photo ID.

Cambridge Health Alliance HIV and Hepatitis C Referral Line. 617-591-6767. Call to arrange testing and to get connected to specialized HIV primary care in Cambridge or Somerville. Also test for STDs. No charge.

Help with a Positive Exposure to HIV. 617-665-1606. If you are worried after unprotected sex with a high risk partner or someone with HIV, or after sharing works or needles, either go to the Cambridge Hospital Emergency Room and ask about PEP or call the Cambridge Health Alliance - Zinberg HIV Clinic (617-665-1606) and ask to speak with someone about PEP. **YOU MUST BE TREATED WITHIN 72 HOURS OF EXPOSURE** but treatment is free and can help prevent the development of HIV.

Sexual and Reproductive Health



Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinics

Massachusetts General Hospital. 55 Fruit St., Boston. Main Campus. Cox 5. 617-726-2748. Clinic is free regardless of insurance. They will also do HIV testing. Call to schedule an appointment or walk in Tue, Thu, Fri 8:30-11am, Wed 1-3pm.

Boston Medical Center. 725 Albany St. Shapiro Center 9th floor. 617-414-2803. Mon-Tue 8am-4pm, Wed 1-7pm, Thu 1-4pm, Fri 8-11am. The clinic is free regardless of insurance. They will also do HIV testing. This is a walk-in clinic and you will be seen on a first-come-first-serve basis. For ages 13 and up. Call to check clinic times.

Contraceptive Counseling and Pregnancy Testing. Cambridge Health Care for the Homeless providers can provide care or refer you for free reproductive counseling and contraception at Somerville Primary Care (617-591-6300), Somerville Hospital Women's Health Center (617-591-4800) East Somerville Health Center (617-575-5520) or Revere Health Center (781-485-8222).

How Can I Get Help with my Emotions?

Don't forget that you can always call...

Samaritan Line. 24 hour hotline 617-247-0220. If you need someone to talk to.

Cambridge Health Alliance Psychiatric Emergency Room. Cambridge Hospital. 1493 Cambridge St, Cambridge. 617-665-1560. Open every day, all day 24/7. Call or visit for help in an emergency if you feel like hurting yourself or someone else- they can help.

Riverside Community Care (formerly Somerville Mental Health) 63 College Ave., Somerville. 617-623-3278 (Adult Mental Health intakes), 617-623-5478 (Addiction intakes). Mon-Fri 9am-6pm.

Cambridge Health Care for the Homeless

Speak with any health provider about your emotional health. They will help you get help. (see page 33)

PATH Program. PATH Program has outreach mental health specialists in many shelters and day programs who can help you to access mental health services, connect you to Department of Mental Health services, and help apply for benefits. Call 781-734-2025 if you have not been able to contact a specialist through your shelter or day program.

"Being homeless gives you head issues"

"No outlet for release at the shelters"

"It's the little things that add up...that make people snap"

"Most health issues are emotional. Physical needs get taken care of but the questions go around, what am I going to do? What does the future hold?"

How Can I Get Help with Addictions?

" We need more groups at shelters like AA or NA or anger management."

" Stop and take a step back. Separate yourself from the situations that made you homeless –get off drugs, get out of those relationships."

" You can get caught up with hanging around all day, and then addictions are easy to pick up."

There are several AA and NA meetings around Cambridge and Somerville. Call 617-426-9444 for meetings near you.

If you are ready to get some help:

Detox. You can go to an emergency room for medical clearance for a detox or see your provider or go to a Health Care for the Homeless clinic.

Cambridge Health Alliance - The Outpatient Addiction Services (OAS) has intakes every day except Monday at 12 noon at 26 Central Street in Somerville, MA. Call 617-591-6033 for information.

Riverside Community Care (formerly Somerville Mental Health) 63 College Ave., Somerville. 617-623-5478. Mon-Fri 9am-6pm. Call for information and intakes.

Mt Auburn Hospital Prevention and Recovery Services 330 Mt. Auburn St, Cambridge. 617 499-5051.

Alcoholics Anonymous 617-426-9444

Gamblers Anonymous 888-424-3577

Narcotics Anonymous 866-624-3578

What Can I Do About Domestic Violence or Rape?

Domestic Violence

Here are some numbers to help you. Call for help, for advice, for emergency shelter, for groups, for counseling, or just to talk. Sometimes talking to an advocate, even anonymously is the first step out of the situation.

Safelink 1 877-785-2020 A 24 hour hotline

Rape or Sexual Assault

If you are raped, get to a safe place. Call 911 if you want police help. Call someone you trust to be with you. You can call the Crisis Center (below) for advice about what you should do next or to request someone to accompany you to the hospital. If you decide to have a medical evaluation and treatment to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, go to a hospital emergency room and ask for a SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) nurse who is specially trained to treat rape survivors. Cambridge Hospital, Mass General, Beth Israel Deaconess, Boston Medical, Brigham & Women's and Newton Wellesley all have SANE nurses on call.

BARCC Boston Area Rape Crisis Center

617-492-7273/ 617-492 **RAPE** (7273) or 1-800-841-8371

This is an organization that offers services to rape survivors. Call for information 24 hours a day. They offer short term counseling, medical advocates to go to the hospital with you, help with legal questions, and other services.

You finally have a key

"For me the challenge is meeting new people in my life and having to tell them what happened to me. Homelessness... I hate this word. Or forgetting all about it. Hopefully achieving happiness and stability. If I can achieve this, I will be okay."

"There's help. You can do it – I'm living proof."

"I am pretty much preparing for the future. I hope it is not unpredictable and doesn't throw another curve ball on me. I try to move forward."

"You'll get to the other side."

"Imagine where you want to be – have it clear in your mind and say... I'll get through this."

"I had to believe that I'm going to accomplish something, that something good will come from this."

Dealing with isolation

"Learn to keep the friendships you have. Make yourself go out, even if you don't want to."

"Go to school, or take classes."

"I'm going to try Women's Place."

"I have a pet dog."

"Join groups, for example Girl Talk Theater."

"Family, especially grandchildren."

"A job, a pet, go out with family or friends."



Getting the emotional, spiritual, and social support you need

"You need to accept help from others, open yourself to others."

"If you can change your attitude about what is, what is changes."

"You need someone who picks you up and carries you at times."

"Women's Drop In in Cambridge, Rosie's Place in Boston."

"Day programs and On the Rise."

"Therapy, AA/NA and finding someone you can trust."

"Counseling" "Family" "Advocates"

"Good friends that you can trust and talk to."

"Try going to church."

"Belonging to groups." "Caring for a house plant."

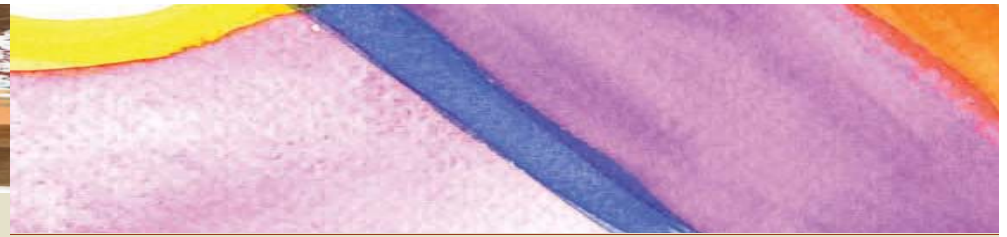
"Feel you have a purpose."

"Stay humble. Let life unfold, instead of trying to control it too much."

"Work and On the Rise."

"Listen to Music."

"Go out with friends, go to church activities, care for a pet, talk with God."



Setting Your Priorities So You Can Keep the Keys

"Feeling worthy is so important."

"You gotta do the things that you think you cannot do."

"Get on a budget you can work with."

"No matter what I do, on the 1st I pay my rent."

"Get a payee."

"Pay rent first." "Pay all bills"

"Have money for food." "Go to food pantries."

"Get support."

"Take care of your physical and emotional health."

"I try to plan ahead. I indulge once in a while in little things just to keep sane."

"Do something good for yourself. Take care of yourself. Happiness comes from within, not outside. For me it's exercise, for another woman, just a bath."

"Take care of appointments."

"Make a to-do list. Do not overwhelm your schedule."

Dealing With Old Difficulties

"Stop and take a look back. Separate yourself from the situations that made you homeless—get off drugs, get out of those relationships. Then you can think clearly."

"This is very difficult. The past can cause anxiety and be overwhelming."

"Get educated, break bad habits, set goals, and break away from the past."

"Remember that there is nothing on the street but getting sick. I spent a lot of years using drugs and don't have nothing from that."

"Make a list of good and bad. Get some help, counseling."

"Use AA/NA sponsors. Try to keep busy."

"I had to leave all that behind me. I concentrated on me and then my grandchild was born. Those two things hold me together like glue."

"Women's groups." "Art groups or classes." "Creative outlets." "Writing"
"Music"

"Exercise" "Self-esteem builders"

"Stay away from those that have no hopes and dreams. Don't let them put you back where you were."

Getting Along with Neighbors

"Go to the events in your housing. We have breakfasts that I try to go to."

"Go to community events."

"Be patient." "Always be courteous" "Be polite and cordial."

"Keep to yourself, say hi and bye."

"Mind your business. Be open-minded. When in doubt, be polite and walk away."

Maintaining Good Habits and Health

"What's good? Waking up every morning."

"It is hard to start caring about yourself again. You would fight hard for a friend, but you have to convince yourself to fight for yourself."

"We don't know enough about health. Get some health education."

"Learning to ask questions is critical."

"Stay on meds." "Exercise" "Therapy"

"Learn more about nutrition and healthy living."

Keeping Connected With Your Health Care Providers

"Get someone who will be a cheerleader in your life. Someone who gets excited when you are getting better."

"Sometimes I need someone who will come and knock on my door. Someone who gives a damn."

"When providers reach out to us, it helps."

"Find someone with enthusiasm, who says, 'you can do it, you are worthy!'"

"Build trust over time with providers."

"Keep your appointments."

"Be honest and straightforward with them."

"If you are not happy with the provider you're with....just simply ask for another one."

Help Moving In

Solutions At Work: The Moving Up Program, 1151 Mass. Ave. Cambridge (in the church basement). 617/492-0300. Provides low cost moving services. Call or stop in to arrange a move. Rates are \$70/hour for 2 men and a truck with a \$45 additional charge if the move is outside of Cambridge. If you are working with a housing advocate or case manager they can refer you and may help you find funds if you are unable to pay.

Furniture Bank – Mass Coalition for the Homeless

781/595-7570.

11 Bubier Street, Lynn. You must have a referral sent by a case manager or advocate before making an appointment to get furniture. You need to have a truck or van with you in order to pick out furniture.

American Friends Service Committee – Material Assistance Program

5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge. (basement of the meetinghouse) 617/876-5312. Referral and appointment required. In addition to clothing they have some small household items and bedding which is sometimes helpful while awaiting a furniture bank appointment.

Craigslist.org - If you have access to a car (and a computer), you may try this website for the Boston area for free or low cost items.

Project Bread Hotline - 1 800/645-8333. Monday – Friday 8-5. They will help you locate a food pantry near your housing. They can also help find meals programs and help with food stamp applications.

A Miracle

There is no thought in my mind, being homeless looking for shelter, can be hard to find.

Being homeless in Boston, one has to learn about many places, meet many faces.

Being homeless is no joke, especially when we are broke.

But God has been my angel from the sky, an angel that has kept us alive.

Swimming to life to reach the shore, always trying to look for an open door.

I have been homeless for quite a while, it feels like I've been walking for millions of miles.

Through my journey, I have met so many people from all walks of life, people that have survived, the high waves and high tides.

We are people of miracles that happens from day to day, even if it means, we have to push to get our way.

I am a living miracle as I write, finally with struggle of human rights. I have won the fight.

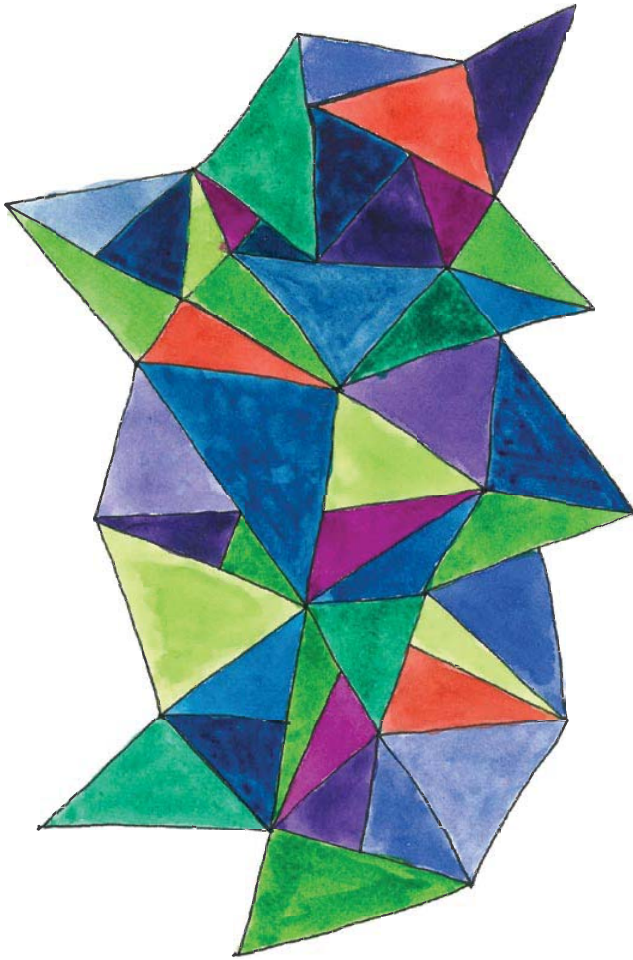
A place to call my own, with a lot of support, and a place to call home.

So you see, being homeless isn't always a place to be, but we somehow try to stay afloat, being captains of our own boat.

It's not always about staying alive, its about knowing how to survive.

We are miracles.

-- Elizabeth Feliciano



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Cambridge Health Alliance
A COMMUNITY OF CARING



CAMBRIDGE COMMISSION
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN