

Municipal Welfare Officials and Administrators,

RE: Emergency Housing Placement Best Practices

Thank you for your continued commitment to meet your legal and humanitarian obligations. Also, for increasingly being an inside advisory voice of human services within our city and town halls.

New Hampshire is a great state to live in; however, 2024 continues to be a year of similar affordable housing challenges throughout our state, and unique challenges throughout our regions. We continue to solution find to maximize what is great about New Hampshire and minimize what is challenging us.

The 2023 update to RSA 165:1-c was the most significant change to the RSA in decades, as it pragmatically targeted areas of longtime concern, frustration, and fair practice. People now do not change their original residency, for municipal local welfare purposes, while staying in hospitals, correctional facilities, treatment program centers, and emergency sheltering services, including motels and hotels (when paid for by municipalities or other service assistance providers.) Additionally, the law now requires that “Municipalities shall communicate and coordinate assistance options with each other, including reimbursements from municipalities of origin.” This change seeks to ensure that municipal local welfare officials continue to practice not only cost-effective approaches, but collaborative and humanitarian approaches as well.

We can acknowledge that New Hampshire is fortunate to enjoy diverse regions while acknowledging our differences, including the availability of human helping services. This dynamic can challenge municipal local welfare’s equal ability to refer to human services, including regional emergency housing.

NHLWAA is increasingly at the table of solution finding with local, regional, and state decision makers. Our influence to create positive changes increases when association members practice humanitarian and ethical helping practices. The following best practices should be observed regarding emergency housing placements:

Our legal obligation to “communicate and coordinate assistance options with each other.”

- Referrals to emergency housing sheltering, especially outside of our municipality of origin, should be confirmed available and accessible prior to transport.

- People referred to emergency housing for limited overnight stays should have means of return to the municipality of origin the next business day.
- Referrals to emergency housing, including motels/hotels, should consider distance to existing frequently needed medical appointments, travel time to school for children, distance from existing employment, and ability to self-care, as part of their decision-making process.
- Recognizing allowable expenses for permanent housing rent and motel/hotel emergency housing are determined differently, with motels/hotels determined by the least costly available and accessible to accommodate the unique need.

As many are aware, veering from the above legal and agreed best municipal welfare practices can result in strained working relationships with emergency shelters and other municipalities, legal scrutiny, reputation damaging media coverage, and most importantly, potential harm to a human being.

NHLWAA can better represent and advocate for improved service options, including for rural areas, when we use collaborative and overall humanitarian practices.

I am honored to serve as president of NHLWAA and to have the opportunity to represent you. I am grateful to work with your elected board of directors that believe in continuous improvement. It is only by working together that we can better meet our legal obligations humanely and cost-effectively.

Please consider sharing this communication with your municipal administrative leaders.

Respectfully,

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