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## Making the Homeless Disappear: Redefining Homelessness in Massachusetts

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# Making the Homeless Disappear

# Redefining Homelessness in Massachusetts

Sue Marsh

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*While unemployment rocked Massachusetts, housing costs remained at record levels, and the federal government continued its inattention to housing and human service programs, the numbers of homeless families sheltered by the commonwealth of Massachusetts declined. This article examines the changes over the last decade in the way Massachusetts provides shelter to homeless families. What has in fact changed for homeless families, Marsh contends, is whether the state of Massachusetts considers them homeless. An increasingly complicated and burdensome set of rules has become a highly effective gatekeeper that keeps the commonwealth's shelter expenditures down and homeless families out.*

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Counting the homeless has served a variety of functions for the past decade. Indeed, the politics of counting are so complex, the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) Annual Housing Conference of 1991 dealt exclusively with the issue, inviting a range of scholars, policymakers, and advocates to write and speak about this topic. The controversial aspects of counting cropped up again in the context of the 1990 census, as officials and homeless advocates contested one another's methodologies, premises, and results. Indeed, census taking has become as essential a part of homelessness policy as shelter, affordable housing development, and service delivery.

A key difficulty in counting homeless people is the very nature of their circumstances. Homeless persons are transient — they lack a permanent place to live. “A count of the homeless always reflects only those who have been observed, identified, or otherwise estimated. But a hidden population [such as the homeless], by definition, also contains members who remain uncounted and unknown.”<sup>1</sup> Clouding the accuracy of such counts are, at a minimum, issues of definition, of timing, and of accessibility.

Who “counts” as a homeless person varies according to perspective. During a Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless (MCH)<sup>2</sup> campaign to create a preference for homeless persons for state housing resources, a group of housing and redevelopment officials offered the position that only those without shelter *of any kind* should be considered homeless.<sup>3</sup> This position precludes even those living in cars from

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being defined as homeless. (Commonwealth officials rejected this argument.) Most frequently, it is the decision to include households living in overcrowded and sub-standard conditions as homeless that sparks disagreement. Anna Kondratas, a staff member of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, discounts these groups as legitimately homeless<sup>4</sup> and contends that only those found on the streets or in emergency shelters should be so considered. Providers, legal aid attorneys, and advocates who work with households in these circumstances assert, however, that given the tenuous living conditions in which these families live, they are rightly considered without safe and secure housing. In any event, the lack of consensus — even in terms of defining whom to count — makes surveys that much more difficult.

Homeless families and individuals are without housing for various lengths of time. In Massachusetts, the average length of homelessness for families has ranged from sixty days (in 1990) to the current five to six months. For individuals, homelessness tends to be a longer-term event, primarily because assistance in housing search and provision of housing resources are even less available than they are to parents with children. In any event, the time period of the count — a one-night snapshot, or an unduplicated count over the course of a year — affects the result.

Finally, the ability of the counters to make contact with homeless families and individuals ranges from difficult to impossible. Families illegally doubled up with other families do not willingly identify themselves. Homeless people in hospitals, jails, condemned buildings, and other institutions are unlikely to be recognized as homeless. For many homeless people, the goal is to not to be identified as such, for reasons of safety, security, dignity. While the unwillingness to be seen as homeless often coincides with official unwillingness to see homelessness, the end result is an unknowable number of homeless people.

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### **Shelter Provision as a Benchmark**

In Massachusetts, counts by localities and the commonwealth have been attempted through “streets count” surveys of providers. The city of Boston’s Emergency Shelter Commission, in particular, has been exceptionally straightforward in acknowledging the limits of such a count and cautious in applying the resulting numbers to formulate policy. Generally, Massachusetts officials, providers, and advocates have focused on other measures of need, progress, and accomplishment in assessing homeless policymaking: examples include the numbers of persons served by a particular program and number of requests for service. Such counts have served as measures in claiming progress — or lack of it — in ending homelessness.

The number of persons sheltered by the commonwealth has served as the fundamental measure for both the state’s and advocates’ evaluation of progress in combating and preventing homelessness. Indeed, when he was elected, Governor William Weld indicated that he would use this measure as an indicator of the success or failure of his cuts in human service programs: “If the homeless shelters are absolutely overflowing come October 1, that will tell us something”<sup>5</sup> While there is argument between advocates and officials about shelters as the ultimate measure of the success or failure of governmental policies (and the appropriateness of gauging whether a bad policy decision has been made in visiting the ultimate kind of devastation, homelessness, upon affected persons!), emergency shelter use can be a fair indicator, as

long as those in need have ready access to such resources. It certainly tells us something if the number of homeless sheltered by the state goes up or down — and state officials have grown increasingly invested in having the numbers decline — in telling us that homelessness is disappearing.

Massachusetts's stake in providing emergency shelter to homeless people began with Governor Michael Dukakis's 1983 inaugural speech.

Thousands of homeless wander our streets without permanent *shelter*. *And we must provide it* . . . Tomorrow morning in my office I will convene an emergency meeting of the new cabinet, the Senate president, and speaker of the House, non-profit organizations, civic and religious leaders, and representatives of the Coalition for the Homeless. We will begin immediately to put together a statewide effort which will provide the necessities of life to those in desperate need. We will establish a toll-free hot line for instant referral, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. If needed, we will draw on surplus state hospitals, unused public schools, and as a last resort, National Guard armories to *shelter* the homeless and to distribute surplus food.<sup>6</sup> [Italics added]

Homeless families quickly became the focal point of the state's efforts in providing shelter, and it was not until years later that Executive Office of Human Services Secretary Philip Johnston made the verbal commitment to provide emergency shelter to every homeless individual in need.<sup>7</sup> Chapter 450 of the Massachusetts General Laws, enacted by the legislature in the autumn of 1983, mandated that the commonwealth provide "a program of emergency assistance to needy families with children and pregnant women with no other children — [including] temporary shelter as necessary to alleviate homelessness when such family has no feasible alternative housing available, up to the maximum period subject to federal reimbursement." This program, emergency assistance, has come to be known as EA.

With few family shelters, Massachusetts began to use state-paid hotels and motels to absorb the overflow of homeless families who lacked emergency shelter. The hotel census quickly became a volatile policy issue, with media, legislators, and advocates pointing to the specter of (primarily) women with children subsisting in dilapidated, expensive motels.

The motel rooms are crowded. One room serves as a living room, kitchen and bedroom . . . Sickness spreads easily among children in cramped quarters . . . Cooking over a hot plate means quick meals with little nutritional value. Playgrounds are parking lots . . . Children's education suffer as the family moves from motel to motel. For parents, motel life is extremely stressful.<sup>8</sup>

As horrifying as the physical circumstances of homeless families in emergency shelters, however, state officials reacted even more strongly to the enormous cost of sheltering them. In the same *Globe* article, motel manager George Anderson, who received \$51,000 per month from the Department of Public Welfare to shelter homeless families, noted: "[The motel will be in the business of housing families on welfare for a long time to come because] eight mothers and their kids left last month for places of their own, but about eight new ones came right back in."

Where did the never-ending sources of homeless families come from? As the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) indicated to the legislature in its annual report, families receiving AFDC [Aid to Families with Dependent Children] benefits

live on incomes far below the level needed to meet basic costs of living. In its fiscal 1990 report to the legislature, DPW said:

The problem of families at risk of becoming homeless is increasing, driven in large part by a lack of affordable low income housing. A principal factor in this shortage is the reduction of federal support for new low income housing. For example, in FFY [federal fiscal year] 79 the federal government added 15,000 subsidized units to the Commonwealth's low income housing stock; by FFY87, however new federal production has decreased to less than 2,000 units.<sup>9</sup>

DPW further acknowledges that "AFDC benefit levels contribute to the problem." Indeed, with AFDC incomes far below the poverty line and only one third of AFDC recipients living in public or subsidized housing, the combination of high housing costs and low public assistance grants ensures that more than 60,000 families will live continually at the edge — or over the edge — of homelessness.

For most welfare recipients, shelter costs represent the single largest category of expenditure. In "Special Report: A Profile on Family Homelessness" by Dale Mitchell and Ronna Bernstein of Meredith and Associates, the authors noted: "Virtually every component of each [interviewed] family's shelter costs (rent, fuel and utilities) was beyond their meager financial capabilities . . . Given the mismatch between income and basic shelter costs, it should not be surprising to find that debt to shelter vendors (landlords, utility companies and fuel deliverers) was routine fact of life for those families."<sup>10</sup> Given these 1983 findings, the situation only worsened in the following years. Between 1982 and 1990, housing costs increased dramatically, while welfare benefits lingered at levels of 30 to 40 percent below the federally established poverty line. While AFDC 1970 benefits were at the poverty line (not a very generous standard, in any event), benefit levels eroded greatly due to inflation. Between 1970 and 1987, welfare benefits rose 65 percent, while the cost of living, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, rose by 190 percent.

Table 1

**AFDC Monthly Grants versus Monthly Two-bedroom Apartment Rents**

Year	AFDC Grant for Family of Three	Two-bedroom Apartment Rent
1982	\$356	\$455
1984	\$375	\$528
1986	\$427	\$711
1988	\$510	\$830
1990	\$579	\$857

Source: Department of Public Welfare, City of Boston.

Efforts to address the enormous gap between housing costs and poor families' incomes throughout the 1980s were scattershot at best. As the Massachusetts economy boomed, housing prices were bid up by an oversupply of consumers and under-supply of housing units. Meanwhile, most of the state's housing policies were directed at moderate-income would-be homeowners, individuals with substantial special needs (mental illness or mental retardation), and rental housing developers. AFDC households received no special priority in obtaining what housing assistance was offered by state or federal programs. Cost-of-living increases were provided, but

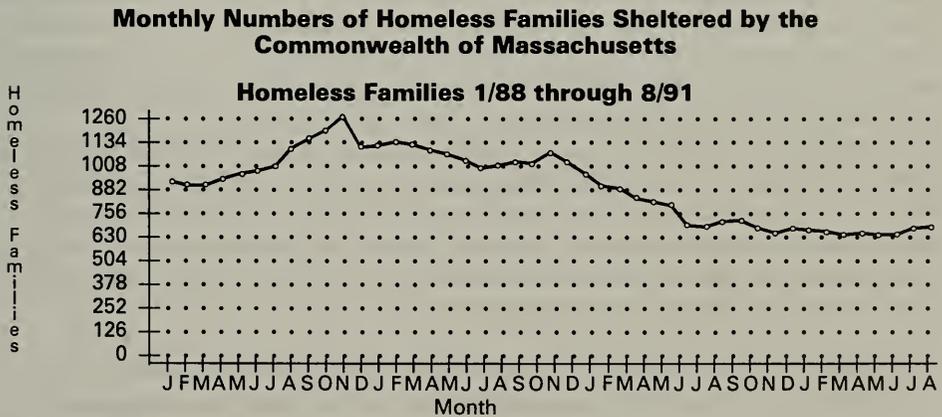
not nearly of the magnitude required to enable AFDC households to cope with private housing market costs. With one exception, described below, the state's efforts at assisting AFDC families in retaining their housing focused on services — landlord-tenant mediation, for example — rather than redressing the rent-income gap. By failing to address the real cause of families' homelessness, as acknowledged in their own reports to the legislature, the commonwealth ensured that its ability to substantially reduce or end homelessness was blunted. With a goal of reducing the number of families sheltered by the commonwealth and a lack of interest and will in pursuing the economically based efforts (with their attendant financial and political costs) to do so, the state became increasingly dependent on blocking access to shelter as a way to show success.

In one instance, however, the commonwealth created and implemented a program that exactly targeted the gap between homeless families' incomes and the cost of private market housing. The Chapter 707 Rental Subsidy Program, based on the federal Section 8 program, was used to great effect for several years to assist homeless families in escaping shelter. While the Chapter 707-assisted family paid a monthly rent equal to 25 percent of income, the commonwealth made up the difference between that amount and the capped amount charged by the private market landlord. With the assistance of state-paid housing search workers, the commonwealth soon found that with their rent-income gap addressed, homeless families were able to leave emergency shelters for permanent, affordable housing quickly. The budget cuts wrought by the last several years of the commonwealth's revenue problems, however, have taken their toll on the Chapter 707 program: in fiscal 1990, the state funded subsidies for two thousand homeless families; the following year, the number was cut by 60 percent; for the next two fiscal years, *no* subsidies were funded.

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Despite the fact that AFDC families' incomes continued at levels too low to make housing affordable, the census count of homeless families sheltered by the state took a dramatic nosedive in the late 1980s, a nosedive unrelated to federal funding of

Figure 1



\*Monthly totals

Source: Created by Leslie Lawrence, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, from data supplied by the Department of Public Welfare.

housing, grant levels, rents, or housing vacancy rates. Rather, the number of homeless families sheltered by the state decreased as a result of the commonwealth's manipulation of eligibility criteria.

Officials' interest in changing eligibility for shelter developed soon after their idea of sheltering homeless families. An internal DPW memo to then Commissioner Charles Atkins advised:

One of the most direct methods for the Department to decrease EA expenditures is to limit the amount of benefits available . . . The Department could place more stringent constraints on the circumstances which create eligibility for the EA program . . . The Department could move towards a tighter definition of homelessness, thus limiting the number of families eligible for homeless benefits.<sup>11</sup>

Atkins followed up on his staff's advice with a memo to his boss:

Emergency Assistance expenditures have grown recently at an alarming rate, tripling in three years from \$7.5 million in FY83 to \$23.1 million . . . It is essential to manage eligibility for hotel benefits to curb the rapid growth in hotel/motel expenditures. The Department proposes to implement an eligibility policy in which only families with a demonstrable need for temporary shelter could receive hotel/motel benefits.<sup>12</sup>

The department entered into a series of discussions with advocates for the homeless, in which DPW proposals to limit access were beaten back. Indeed, advocates succeeded to the extent that the department, in October 1985, promulgated State Letter 745. It specified that households eligible for shelter were those which were "rendered homeless for any reason except for the sole purpose of making itself eligible for EA." In light of later methods of narrowing eligibility, this DPW policy decision is remarkably open.

The hotel count continued to rise throughout 1985 and 1986, fueled by the increasing costs of Massachusetts housing. As it appears that homeless families in hotels were particularly bad for public relations, as opposed to homeless families in shelters, state officials made enormous efforts to reduce reliance on state-paid motels by developing a large network of private, nonprofit family shelters. Somehow, families in shelters seemed to signify homelessness less than families placed in motels. The number of shelters boomed, growing from two state-subsidized programs at the start of the 1980s to more than one hundred — excluding those for battered women — by the decade's close. Administration publications detailed the state's accomplishments in combating homelessness through its great expansion of shelter programs.

The shelter count reached its peak in 1988, with more than 500 families in family shelters and more than 700 in state-financed motels. Late in 1987, DPW announced a set of regulations that instituted a much more rigid system of admission to shelter and contained provisions allowing the department to toss families *out* of shelters.

Significantly, the EA rules, which were circulated in late 1987 and became final in the winter of 1988, allowed the department to

- devise a set list of reasons for homelessness. It included natural disaster, eviction, abuse, overcrowding, and government action, namely, condemnation of buildings.

- place families in a shelter within twenty miles of their community, or a contiguous community, of origin. This meant that homeless families from Boston were placed in shelters in communities like Lowell, Fall River, Taunton, Attleboro, New Bedford, Malden, Peabody, and Saugus, which some not only had never heard of, but could not find their way to them via public or private transportation.
- investigate whether a family had feasible, alternative accommodations with a friend or relative. DPW caseworkers often telephoned lists of persons provided by the homeless families. One mother contacted MCH, complaining that she and her children had been placed with a high school friend with whom she had not been in touch for a decade!
- require a client to sign a “contract” prior to provision of shelter. This quasi-legalistic document, detailing a prospective shelter guest’s responsibilities and agreement to abide by vaguely stated shelter rules, included a blanket authorization waiving the family’s right to privacy. This waiver authorized the welfare department to share information about the homeless family with any other agency of state government.

The effect of these conditions varied from local office to local office. While one had to be homeless for the right reasons to get shelter, documentation requirements were interpreted differently by different DPW workers. A caseworker uninterested in or opposed to providing shelter could use various departmental rules to effectively bar families from it. In a number of instances reported to MCH staffer Leslie Lawrence, DPW workers informed clients that their names would be put on a waiting list for shelter — a virtual stalling tactic, since shelter would never materialize.

As the regulations were implemented, problems in gaining entry to temporary shelter began to crop up. Correspondence to the department regarding shelter access included a variety of case examples, including clients who were told that “there’s no such thing as shelter any longer”; clients who were instructed to go to shelters twenty miles away, without transportation, or in one instance, directions being provided; clients who were forced to wait upward of four hours before being given an application for shelter; and women with children being placed in “line-up” barracks shelters for single adults.

Ms. P. and her two-day-old newborn child requested emergency shelter as her landlord has a valid execution from the court, and is ready to evict her. The worker told her that before she could be placed, the Department would need written statements from her relatives explaining why she could not stay with them, as well as written proof that she had applied for accommodations at the local shelter.

Ms. C. [then asked her DPW worker], “What are you supposed to do for a roof over your head?” The worker responded, “You can spend the weekend at Long Island [a barracks-style shelter for homeless adults] and get back in touch on Monday.” Hearing this, Ms. C. left. Ms. C. could not bring herself to take her three babies to Long Island.<sup>13</sup>

Homeless families already in crisis not infrequently — and not unsurprisingly — gave up in the face of these obstacles. Advocates had the experience of working with

families who had made repeated tries for shelter, and succeeded only when courage and desperation peaked.

As Figure 1 shows, the number of sheltered families reached its peak in late 1988 after months of increases, with more than 1,250 families sheltered by the commonwealth each night, the majority in state-paid hotels/motels. A typical seasonal decline occurred in December, as families stayed out of — or left — shelters during the holidays.

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### The Beginning of the End of Access to Shelter

In the spring of 1989, state officials began a new regulatory drafting process, which ended in the fall of that year. These regulations, still in place, marked the new era of highly restricted access to shelter. Advocates began to hear complaints of families unable to penetrate the emergency shelter gate and of families once again sleeping in cars, hallways, and hospital emergency rooms — situations that had all but disappeared during most of the 1980s. Shelters saw a rapid decline in the number of referrals made to them by local welfare offices.<sup>14</sup> The hotels and motels began to empty out. Families who did manage to squeeze into shelters told of spending an average eight months in them.

The most dramatic changes were related to documenting the need for shelter, particularly for families who had stayed temporarily with friends or families. Rather than a self-declaration as to the need and reason for shelter, DPW required documentation to an unprecedented degree. Families were forced to prove that not only were they homeless for the right reasons, but that they had no feasible, alternative housing. For example, the commonwealth decided that any apartment costing more than 100 percent of a household's Aid to Families with Dependent Children grant, as well as substantial health code violations, was in fact a feasible, alternative housing option. Only when a household was ordered closed by the local board of health — the municipal agency charged with enforcing the health code — or a court would DPW agree to shelter the family.

Most controversial was the new rule that a family forced to leave a doubled-up situation needed verification from the Department of Social Services (DSS) that it was in fact necessary to leave. Over the past decade, MCH and its members repeatedly found that homeless families stayed temporarily with friends or relatives for varying lengths of time prior to a stay in a state-financed hotel or shelter. The term "doubling up" applies to a second, homeless, family moving into the home of a primary, or "host," tenant. Doubling up was considered a feasible, alternative accommodation by DPW. Such circumstances become untenable for a wide range of reasons, including severe overcrowding; threats by the primary tenant's landlord to evict *both* families from the apartment if the doubled-up family failed to vacate; medical problems created for either the primary tenant or the homeless family as a result of the overcrowding; mistreatment, sometimes to the point of physical violence, by the primary tenant; and the more mundane stresses and strains of two households — with differing styles of parenting, housekeeping, cooking, and maintaining household finances — attempting to coexist in living space meant only for one.

Doubling up as a means to forestall placement in state-supported shelters and hotels has been so commonplace, in fact, that an informal survey of residents of a Boston family shelter found that the average time spent living in other people's housing was over one year prior to entrance into a shelter.

The Department of Social Services developed an evaluation of doubled-up families which included a written assessment that there existed an imminent threat to the health and safety of the homeless children. If the DSS finds that there is no such threat, the homeless family is not deemed eligible for emergency shelter. The DSS assessment includes an evaluation of medical problems, protective risks, behavioral/emotional/development issues, "ability to perform parental duties," physical space, and school performance.

The new DSS assessment proved to be an effective tool in reducing the number of homeless families deemed eligible for shelter.

Since November 1, 1989, when the new Emergency Assistance policy was implemented, we [the Department of Public Welfare] have experienced an 18% reduction in the number of homeless families *needing* shelter. The caseload has been reduced from 1,067 to 872. The greatest reduction has been in the number of families who have to be temporarily sheltered in hotels/motels. The Department only uses these facilities when shelter space is not available.<sup>15</sup> [Italics added]

Of course, it was not that fewer families needed shelter, but rather that the department provided shelter to a reduced number of households, using a very effective screening tool: an assessment by the state's child protection agency. An internal draft memo from the DPW noted that "DSS Assessments have resulted in almost 250 families remaining in their current housing situation since November 1, and not entering the emergency sheltering system . . . General consensus is that the DSS component is of great value to the new FY90 delivery system."<sup>16</sup>

Why should an assessment by the Department of Social Services be such an obstacle for families seeking shelter? Advocates found that a number of factors played a part.

- The DSS assessment process requires that a state worker visit the home of the friend or relative, where the homeless family is living. Thus, the host family, who is charitably providing a shelter, is subjected to the scrutiny of a state agency. This occurs despite the fact that the host family is not seeking any assistance from the Commonwealth. Not surprisingly, host families have objected to such an examination.
- In devising its assessment process, DPW chose a branch of state government, DSS, that frequently frightens homeless families, for fear that an attempt would be made by DSS to remove the children from the parents and place them in foster care. Indeed, assessments have triggered this process, both for host and guest families. What began for some families as a request for shelter ended in a custody battle with the state.
- For some households in crisis and already disorganized, the additional step of seeking and participating in a DSS assessment proves to be a step too much.
- For some DPW workers, the additional layer of bureaucracy required by an assessment provides a disincentive to understaffed welfare offices in offering shelter. A DPW worker told an MCH member that she didn't want to make a referral for a DSS assessment, because if it indicated an imminent threat to

health or safety, she would be forced to place the family in shelter. The DPW worker avoided the dilemma by refusing to make the referral.

- The standards by which DSS performs its assessments are inherently flawed. MCH staff have seen instances in which DSS decided that there was no threat to a homeless family's health or safety despite other evidence to the contrary, such as a doctor's certificate that the mother's health and that of her unborn baby were in jeopardy because of the sleeping arrangements of a doubled-up situation. Moreover, DSS has taken the position that a decision by a host family to kick out a homeless family *does not* constitute a threat to health or safety. Thus, MCH staff have examined DSS assessments which note that a homeless family must vacate its current refuge in two days, yet concurrently conclude that no threat to health or safety exists.

Overall, the routine, but informal, denials of shelter experienced for years by homeless families and their advocates became in 1989 an organizing system of rejection that left many families stranded.

The mission of providing emergency services to homeless families succeeded for most of the 1980s as Massachusetts created a sheltering system that provided temporary respite for essentially all homeless parents with children in need. At the close of the decade — 1989, 1990, 1991 — this changed. Despite a state statute that mandated the commonwealth's responsibility to shelter homeless families, an increasingly complex and burdensome regulatory system to manage the rising numbers of homeless emerged in the late 1980s. The state's efforts to provide temporary, rather than permanent, solutions to homelessness doomed their efforts from the start and ensured that the only means by which progress — as measured by the number of families in state-supported shelters and hotels — would be made would be through limiting the inflow of homeless families into shelter. The recent round of budget cuts, decimating the only state program which addressed the rent-income gap for homeless and poor families, portends a state response to homelessness that falls even further from a real solution than those pursued during the last decade. This lack of willingness to grapple with the economic causes and solutions of homelessness will only lead the commonwealth into even more draconian methods of governing who is in need.

Of all the ways to "end" homelessness, redefining a homeless family as *not* homeless must certainly qualify as one of the most inventive. It is also a strategy that favors short-term savings over longer-term ones, both in terms of government spending and the toll on the household. The problem of homelessness has become an intractable one only in that the solutions sought are limited in perspective. The economics of homelessness are simple enough — incomes that fall far behind the cost of housing — to make our collective lack of action inexcusable. It's time to focus on assistance for homeless families rather than wishing — or defining — them away. ♪

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## Notes

1. Eleanor Chelimsky, "Politics, Policymaking, Data and the Homeless," Fannie Mae Annual Housing Conference 1991, 4. Ms. Chelimsky is the director of the U.S. General Accounting Office's Program Evaluation and Methodology Division.

2. MCH is a statewide, private, nonprofit organization established in 1981. It is a direct service provider to homeless and formerly homeless people, as well as the leading advocate on public policy issues affecting homeless and nearly homeless people. For the past decade, MCH has primarily focused on affordable housing, income maintenance programs, and services to the homeless (both emergency and permanent). MCH accomplishes its work through advocacy, public education, organizing, and policy campaign work.
3. Letter from Thomas Connelly, Jr., executive secretary, Massachusetts NAHRO, to Joseph Flatley, assistant secretary, Executive Office of Communities and Development, August 28, 1985.
4. Notes from Ms. Kondratas's presentation to the board of directors, National Coalition for the Homeless, March 16, 1991. Ms. Kondratas is the assistant secretary for community planning and development at HUD.
5. *Boston Globe*, "Weld: Many Back Cuts," July 23, 1991, 17. Governor Weld's cuts for fiscal 1992 include the elimination of income assistance to families and individuals receiving General Relief; ending of housing development and subsidization funding; and the elimination of homelessness prevention programs and services.
6. Michael Dukakis, inaugural address, January 6, 1983.
7. While Massachusetts has a statutory obligation to shelter homeless families and pregnant women, it has never adopted such a mandate for homeless individuals. This is demonstrated in the use of hotel and motels for families; when the state runs out of shelter space, it uses hotel rooms. For individuals, when there is no shelter space, that's it. Homeless families are "allowed" to remain in shelters during the day and do not have to line up for a different bed every night. Homeless individuals must leave emergency shelters early each morning and search out a new bed each evening. Shelters such as the Pine Street Inn, New England's largest, have responded to this situation first by having individuals sleep on their lobby floor, and second by giving priority to the creation of additional shelter beds, at least during the winter months. This failure to provide even adequate numbers of shelter beds is an indication of our community's tendency to blame the single homeless for their homelessness. The sight of a homeless mother with children forced to spend their days or nights huddled in a doorway stirs our social conscience in a way no longer accomplished by a homeless individual.
8. "67 Cape Families Living in Motels," *Boston Globe*, February 10, 1985, 73.
9. FY90 Report to the Great and General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on Standard Budgets of Assistance for the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program, January 1990, Department of Public Welfare, ii. As of August 22, 1991, the Weld administration had not complied with their statutory duty to submit an updated report.
10. "Special Report: A Profile on Family Homelessness." Poor People's Budget FY84, Dale Mitchell and Ronna Bernstein, May 1983.
11. Memorandum to Charles Atkins, commissioner, DPW, from Genia Long and Matt Fishman, Budget Office, May 13, 1985.
12. Memorandum from Charles M. Atkins, commissioner, DPW, to Philip W. Johnston, secretary, Executive Office of Human Services, July 30, 1985.
13. Letter to DPW commissioner Charles Atkins from Sandra David, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, March 13, 1987.
14. Family shelters in Massachusetts receive, with very few exceptions, a substantial (75% and more) portion of their operating budgets from the Department of Public Welfare. In return, DPW reserves that percentage of a facility's shelter beds. Without referrals of homeless families from the department, shelters are at risk of going into deficit. This financing arrangement has given nonprofit shelters a fiscal interest, as well as one of social justice, in ensuring that homeless families have access to emergency shelter.
15. Affidavit of Robert D. Wakefield, Jr., *MCH et al. vs. Philip W. Johnston et al.*, February 23, 1990.
16. Memorandum to Nancy K. Kaufman, deputy commissioner for Program Operations, DPW, from Robert D. Wakefield, Jr., assistant commissioner for Housing, April 20, 1990.