



REQUEST FOR DAYTIME GATHERING SPACE AT LOCAL CONGREGATIONS & VOLUNTEERS

Updated 2/14/24

Request: Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston/Ten Point, Boston Faith & Justice Network, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston, Massachusetts Council of Churches and Immigrant Family Services Institute (IFSI) need congregations in greater Boston to provide physical space for a minimum of 30 people, for a minimum of two weeks, any days between Monday through Friday, during the hours of 9:30am-4:30pm.

These new neighbors need a warm room and access to a bathroom. Access to a kitchen would be helpful to allow IFSI staff or volunteers to provide lunch. Staff from IFSI will be present to assist with programming.

Things that would be additionally beneficial include: Access to WIFI; a secondary room to allow children to have some school programming.

If congregations do not have space to support a daytime gathering space, volunteers to speak English with new migrants are *greatly* needed. At this point, no training is required. We simply need willing individuals to practice speaking English with the new migrants who are eager to learn.

Background: In October 2023, Governor Healey announced that the state would cap the number of placements in the Emergency Assistance (EA) family shelter program and related state-funded family shelter sites at 7,500 families due to financial, space, and staffing constraints.

After hitting the 7,500 cap on November 9th, the Healey-Driscoll Administration began implementing a waiting list for families approved for Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter on November 10th, without providing families with alternative safe places to stay. We have already begun to see children and families sleeping in places not meant for human habitation, such as [Logan Airport](#) and hospital emergency rooms.

On November 15th, the Legislature ended formal sessions for the calendar year without approving a supplemental budget that would provide \$250 million in funding to serve families experiencing homelessness and could require the Administration to provide overflow shelter spaces. That supplemental budget was finally approved after formal session.

An Emergency Overnight shelter is now operating in a former courthouse in Cambridge. But all people there must leave by 7am. As of January 2024, there are approximately 200 people including children staying at the Emergency Overnight Shelter. They need somewhere to go during the day while they wait for more permanent housing. These persons are here legally, and must be treated with dignity as the beloved children of God that they are. Other families are staying at the 24 hr shelter at the Melnea Cass Center in Roxbury, but that gymnasium only has space for beds and not for gathering or programming.

Families and individuals at the Emergency Overnight Shelter in Cambridge until 7am, when they are taken by state bus to MIT's campus to shower. Then they are taken hopefully to a church location by approx. 9:30am for somewhere arm to stay for the day. They return by bus at 4:30pm, when they can check back into the Emergency Overnight Shelter at 6pm.

These new neighbors are eligible for MassHealth, food assistance, and work authorization. They are eager to learn English, work, and transition into more stable housing.

We are seeing many families traveling together to find safety. A number of pregnant individuals are also arriving. Many have experienced trauma through the instability of their travels. We believe that congregations with space available can make a real difference in the lives and well-being of the people arriving here in Greater Boston.



WE'RE SEEKING

ESL

VOLUNTEER
TEACHERS

SCAN QR CODE



IFSI-USA
EDUCATION

We invite you to consider opening the doors of your congregations to those seeing refuge.

For more information or to include your congregations as a possible day site, please contact:

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