

FORECLOSURE PREVENTION RESOURCES

March 2009

The many people throughout the Archdiocese affected by the current housing crisis should know they are not alone. Families facing foreclosure are encouraged to get help as early as possible. While the new programs enacted by the Obama Administration are still being developed, the plan proposes to help an estimated 9 million homeowners lower their interest rates and right-size their mortgages. To see if you qualify, visit <http://financialstability.gov/makinghomeaffordable/>. Meanwhile, there are places to call for help right now and the most important advice is for people to seek help and seek it early.

If you are renting a home that has been foreclosed upon, you may not have to move out at all:

Only a court can tell you to move out. According to Massachusetts law, tenants (or former owners) who live in a property that is foreclosed on are entitled to at least 30 days written notice if a lender wants them to vacate their home. They do not have to leave immediately and have a right to a hearing in court. Also, if a tenant receives a state or federal rental subsidy, the terms of their rental agreement will not be affected by a foreclosure sale. Legal resources for tenants are listed below.

If you are a homeowner facing imminent foreclosure:

The Massachusetts Division of Banks can intervene and work with lenders to secure a 30 to 60 day delay in the foreclosure process to allow additional time to work out a possible alternative to foreclosure. Though there is no guarantee of success, the Division has halted foreclosure for more than 500 homeowners since last spring. The hotline is open Monday through Friday from 8:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. Consumers must call within 7 business days of the foreclosure auction (617-956-1501).

Homeowners should watch out for foreclosure rescue scams, which are illegal in Massachusetts:

Legislation prohibits predatory, for-profit foreclosure rescue transactions, where the homeowner transfers title to the rescuer while maintaining future interests, including a lease interest or right to reacquire the home. Foreclosure rescue transactions between family members or arranged by a nonprofit community or housing organization are legal.

If you are having difficulty making payments:

- **HOPE Hotline: Immediate Counseling:** A 24-hour, 7-day-a-week national hotline (888-995-HOPE (4673) or www.995hope.org) that offers individualized counseling in English & Spanish. Counselors ask that callers have mortgage loan number, recent mortgage statements, and household income and expenses information ready when they call. They will also make referrals to local counseling agencies when available. *For a list of local agencies providing counseling, see below.*
- **Neighborhood Assistance Center of America (NACA)'s Home Save** program has been successful in restructuring owner-occupant mortgages by permanently reducing the interest rate and/or mortgage amount to a payment the homeowner can afford. NACA has reached solutions with major lenders and loan servicers. All of NACA's services are free. 1-888-302-6222.
- **Locating mortgage holders:** Many home mortgages are held by out-of-town companies, leaving homeowners unsure of who to talk with. MERS is a company that keeps track of the identity of registered loans servicers and offers web or phone based assistance to homeowners through www.mers-servicerid.org and 888-679-6377.

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- **New England Mortgage Relief Fund:** Five major banks have pooled \$125 million to create the Mortgage Relief Fund, which helps New England homeowners who are in good standing with their current mortgage loan(s), but who may be experiencing difficulty making payments now. More information at www.mortgagerelieffund.com.
- **Home Saver Foreclosure Prevention Program** helps borrowers who are unable to pay their mortgage, through counseling and refinancing the existing loan. The Home Saver program is not available to home owners who are already in foreclosure, who are more than 60 days delinquent or who own more than one property. Other restrictions apply. Homeowners are referred through the HOPE hotline listed above or through a local counseling agency. See www.masshousing.com.
- **Special Financial Assistance for Veterans:** 800-827-0336.

For legal assistance:

- **Pro Bono Foreclosure Assistance Hotline:** Leave message at 800-342-5297 or 617-603-1700. Income limits apply.
- **Community Legal Services:** For Cambridge residents facing loss of rental housing due to foreclosure, 617-661-1010.
- **Greater Boston Legal Services:** Legal advice about foreclosures, will take some cases, 800-323-3205 (9 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.).
- **Harvard Legal Aid Bureau:** Foreclosure Task Force for tenants, weekly office hours, 617-495-4408.
- **WilmerHale Legal Services Bureau:** Owners and tenants facing eviction, 617-522-3003.
- **Merrimack Valley & Neigh. Legal Services:** Low-income & elderly residents of Essex and North Middlesex Counties, 978-458-1465.

Congressional Offices are working on foreclosure issues and encourage constituents to call for help:

Sen. Edward Kennedy, 617-565-3170,
 Sen. John Kerry, 617-565-8519
 Rep. Michael Capuano, 617-621-6208
 Rep. Bill Delahunt, 617-770-3700
 Rep. Barney Frank, 617-332-3920

Rep. Stephen Lynch, (Jim Gordon), 617-428-2000
 Rep. Ed Markey, (Sarah Butler), 781-396-2900
 Rep. John Tierney, 978-531-1669; 781-595-7375
 Rep. Niki Tsongas, 978-459-0101

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Local agencies offering counseling and assistance to those facing unaffordable mortgages, foreclosure or eviction:

CITY OF BOSTON

- **City of Boston, Boston Home Center**, also make legal referrals through the Real Estate Board, 617-635-4663(HOME), www.bostonhomecenter.com
- **City of Boston, Rental Housing Resource Center**: 617-635-7368, www.cityofboston.gov/rentalhousing/
- **Codman Square Neigh. Development Corp.**, Veronica Truell, 617-825-4224 x124
- **City Life/Vida Urbana**, Help all owners or renters prevent eviction, 617-524-3541 x310
- **Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation**, Lorraine Grubbs, 617-825-4200 x226, Call for an appointment.
- **Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation**, (Roxbury, Mattapan, Dorchester & Hyde Park), Penelope Pelton , 617-427-3599
- **Urban Edge**, Bob Credle, 617-989-9329

GREATER BOSTON

- **ABCD Mattapan Family Service Center**, 617-298-2045
- **ESAC**, 617-524-4820
- **Homeowner Options for Massachusetts Elders (HOME)**, Low-income homeowners over the age of 50 at risk of losing their homes, (Over 60 for other mortgage assistance), 800-583-5337
- **Veterans Benefits Clearing House**, Ricardo White, 617-541-8846
- **Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership**, Foreclosure prevention program for landlords, Steve Freeman, 617-425-6761. Tenants with Section 8 or MBHP Voucher, 617-425-6700
- **Neighborhood of Affordable Housing**, Call for an appointment, 617-567-5882

NORTH

- **Arlington Community Trabajando** (Merrimack Valley), 978-685-6274

- **Chelsea Restoration Corporation** (Chelsea/Revere), Homeowners only, 617-889-2277
- **Community Service Network** (Lynn, Gloucester, Beverly, Burlington, Danvers, Essex, Hamilton, Ipswich, Lynnfield, Lexington, Manchester, Marblehead, Middleton, Melrose, Nahant, N.Reading, Peabody, Reading, Rockport, Salem, Saugus, Stoneham, S. Hamilton, Topsfield, Wakefield, Wilmington, Winchester, Woburn), 781-438-5981
- **Gloucester Housing Auth.**, (Gloucester, Rockport, Manchester, Essex, Ipswich), Cathy Erkkila, 978-281-4770
- **Home Preservation Center** (Lowell/Lawrence), 978-970-0600 x3
- **Lawrence Community Works**, (Lawrence), 978-722-2639, Register for monthly workshop, they will follow-up with one-on-one counseling
- **Lynn Housing Authority and Neighborhood Development**, (Several towns, Lynn families have preference), 781-581-8611

SOUTH

- **Brockton Housing Partnership Foreclosure Hotline**, 508-586-6080, Homeowners should call and leave a message, which will be returned by a staff member, (English, Spanish, Portuguese and French)
- **Brockton Interfaith Community**, Tenant support and referrals, Carol Delorey, 508-583-6464
- **Neighborhood Housing Services of the South Shore**, Brian Moriarty, 508-895-1783, offer evening foreclosure clinics 2x month & one-on-one counseling
- **Plymouth Redevelopment Authority** (South Shore), 508-747-1620 x147
- **Quincy Community Action Programs, Inc.** (Norfolk Co.), Deirdre Hall, 617-479-8181 x315, dhall@qcap.org
- **South Shore Housing Development Corporation**, 800-242-0957, 781-422-4200