WELCOME TO THE CAMBRIDGE HOUSING AUTHORITY

Resident Handbook for Elderly & Disabled Public Housing

Cambridge Housing Authority
675 Massachusetts Ave., 2nd Floor
Cambridge, MA 02139
www.cambridge-housing.org
+1 617.497.4040
TDD 1-800-545-1833, ext. 122

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

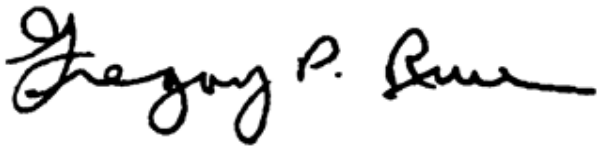
Dear New Resident,

Welcome to the Cambridge Housing Authority! This handbook is your guide to CHA's policies and rules. It outlines what you can expect of us, as property managers, and what we can expect from you, as residents. It also contains lots of useful information that will help you settle into your new home.

Please read this handbook carefully and save it to refer to from time to time. If you speak a language other than English, please ask for help getting the handbook translated. Haitian Creole, Spanish and Portuguese editions of this handbook are available in the management office or online at www.cambridge-housing.org.

We are committed to providing you with the highest quality housing, so please let us know anytime you have questions or concerns about your apartment or development. And again, welcome!

Sincerely,



Gregory P. Russ
Executive Director

Una versión en Español de este documento está disponible en la Oficina de Gerencia, en la Oficina Central del CHA o en la página web de CHA: www.cambridge-housing.org

Yon vèsyon Kreyòl Ayisyen pou dokiman enpòtan sa-a disponib nan Biwo Administrasyon-a, nan Biwo Santral CHA, epi nan sit intènèt CHA:www.cambridge-housing.org.

A versão em Português deste documento está a sua disposição no seu Escritório de Gerencia, no Local Central de Gerencia do CHA, e no Website do CHA: www.cambridge-housing.org

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1. Management Responsibilities

The Property Manager

The property manager is the primary point of contact for you if you have any questions or concerns about your apartment or development. Business hours for the management office are Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, with the exception of legal holidays.

Each office has walk-in hours, during which time you can meet with the manager or staff without an appointment. Walk-in hours are posted in the management office. Staff names and phone numbers can be found in the back pocket of your orientation folder.

CHA Responsibilities

As your landlord, CHA is obliged to provide you with certain services. These include:

- making routine repairs, as needed and in accordance with the state sanitary code;
- providing facilities to dispose of rubbish; and
- ensuring heat and hot water are available in your apartment.

CHA also provides emergency repair services for situations like loss of heat or apartment flooding, after hours and on the weekends.

Repairs and Maintenance

CHA is responsible for any needed repairs caused by normal wear and tear, like a leaky faucet or broken screen. A maintenance fee may be charged when repairs or damages are caused by residents or their guests. Repairs to broken a window or holes in the wall are examples of damages likely to be charged to residents. The schedule of maintenance charges can be found in the back pocket of your orientation folder. Charges are subject to change, with proper notification to residents.

If your apartment needs repair, you must notify the manager's office. Please call the manager's office immediately and before conditions worsen. For example, do not wait until a small drip in your sink becomes a leak. Likewise, notify the manager immediately at the first sign of any insects or rodents in your apartment. CHA makes every effort to complete repairs in a timely manner.

Do not ask maintenance workers to make repairs. They are not allowed to do any work that has not been assigned to them by the

manager. This ensures that work is performed efficiently and in the proper order.

Although the manager has a duplicate key, this key will not be used to enter your apartment without your permission except in an emergency or after 48-hours written notice. If you prefer that repairs be done only while you or someone else is present, please make arrangements to be home, have a trusted adult let the maintenance workers into your apartment, or talk to the manager to see if the work can be rescheduled.

Routine repairs that do not require an emergency response should be reported to your manager as soon as possible during regular office hours.

Report emergencies on weekends or at night to **617-864-3020**

Emergency Repairs: Emergency maintenance staff are available at night (after 6 PM) and on weekends for emergencies such as a loss of electricity or heat, toilet blockages, water leaks causing damage, blown circuits and gas leaks. For your safety, ***all emergency crew members carry CHA identification badges***. To report emergencies on weekends or at night, **call (617) 864-3020** and give your name,

address, and phone number. Please provide a description of the problem to the answering service operator.

> **NOTE**: Between September 16 and June 14, CHA maintains a minimum temperature of 68 degrees Fahrenheit in your apartment between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m., and 64 degrees Fahrenheit between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Lock-outs: In the event that you leave your apartment without your key, you may request assistance getting into your apartment from management during regular business hours. However, a fee will be charged for each lock-out. After normal business hours and on holidays, please contact the answering service at **617-864-3020**.

Annual Unit Inspection

At least once a year, the manager will inspect your apartment and CHA provided appliances to make sure that they are being properly maintained. The manager will order any repairs that are needed and assess charges for any damages beyond normal wear and tear that are caused by residents. If you need repairs or extermination service, please do not wait for the annual inspection; call the office and report them immediately.

2. Resident Rights and Administrative Responsibilities

Your Lease

All residents receive a copy of their lease when they first move in. The lease is the legally binding contract between you and the Cambridge Housing Authority. It assures your right to live in your apartment as long as you observe the rules. The Authority is legally responsible for enforcing all lease terms.

You should read your lease carefully. Please ask the manager for assistance if you do not understand your lease or if you need it translated.

Items included in the Lease

- Resident Rights
- Who may live in your apartment
- Paying rent
- Rent recertification
- Alterations to the apartment
- Personal property damages
- Annual Unit Inspections
- Tenant responsibilities
- CHA responsibilities
- Move-out policy

Resident Rights

The lease protects your rights to privacy, quiet enjoyment of your apartment, and participation in a tenant organization.

If you believe that the Authority is not meeting its obligations, you should tell your manager. If the manager cannot resolve the problem, you may call the Director of Operations at 617-864-3020. If after speaking with the Director of Operations, you are still not satisfied, please refer to your lease to find out how to file a grievance.

Who May Live in the Apartment?

Only persons listed on your lease may live in your apartment. **Please do not allow anyone who is not listed on the lease** to use your apartment as a mailing address.

With management approval, overnight guests may stay for a maximum of 30 days in any 12 month period.

Extended Absences

If the head of your household is going to be absent from the apartment for longer than 14 days, they must notify the housing manager of their planned absence, secure the apartment to

prevent theft or vandalism and provide the manager with an emergency contact number.

To keep your residency intact, every member of your household must occupy your apartment for at least 9 months during any 12 month period.

Rent Payments

Rent payment is the primary responsibility of the leaseholder, who is the head of household. It is important that you pay your rent on time every month. Failure to pay rent in full and on time may result in legal proceedings to terminate your lease. If you are not able to pay your rent on time, you must talk with your property manager right away.

The amount of rent that you owe is stated in paragraph 1 of your lease. Before the first of each month you will receive a bill in the mail stating the amount of rent you owe the Cambridge Housing Authority. Your payment must be mailed directly to the CHA at the address on the envelope that accompanies your rent statement, unless you have authorized direct payment (automatic rent withdrawal) from your bank account.

When paying by mail, please be sure to include the bottom portion of your bill with your rent payment. Please speak with the management office if you would like to arrange direct payment.

Please note: even with direct payment, CHA will send you a monthly bill. You should disregard the bill if you have arranged for direct payment.

Late Rent Fees

There is a $25.00 late fee for residents failing to pay their rent within 30 days of its due date. CHA may waive the late fee if a resident can show good cause for not making the payment on time.

Rent Recertification

The rent for your apartment is based on your income and family size. You will receive notices in the mail from your manager whenever documentation of this information needs to be updated. The manager will give you an appointment to complete this process, known as "recertification." All recertification information obtained by the housing authority is kept confidential.

If your family size or income changes you may be eligible to receive a rent adjustment. Please inform your manager of any such changes.

Alterations to the Apartment

In order to preserve the quality of our housing, CHA prohibits tenants from painting, wallpapering, or adding contact paper to any surface. Nothing may be tacked or glued to the floor, and no screws or nails may puncture the kitchen cabinets. No satellite dishes are allowed in individual apartments, balconies or affixed to the exterior of the building in any way. Upon request, CHA will install childproof window guards in your apartment.

If you are not sure if an alteration to your apartment is allowed, please speak with someone in the management office prior to proceeding.

Move-out Policy

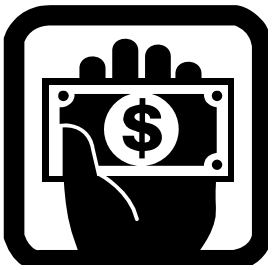
If you plan to move from the apartment you occupy, you must provide at least 30 day written notice to the management office. When you vacate, you are responsible for leaving the apartment clean and empty. Please inform the post office and management office of your forwarding address.

Security Deposit

At the time you moved-in you paid a security deposit equal to one month's rent or $200 (whichever is greater). This deposit will be returned to you at the end of your tenancy, as long as:

a) the apartment is left in satisfactory condition, with no damage beyond normal wear and tear.
b) 30 day written notice has been given to your property manager.
c) no outstanding rent or maintenance fees are owed to CHA.

Interest on security deposits will be paid annually at the tenant's written request or cumulatively, at the end of the lease.



3. Your Responsibilities as a Resident and Neighbor

Once you sign your apartment lease, you are legally responsible to abide by its terms. Tenant responsibilities include obvious things like paying your rent in full and on time, but there are other responsibilities you have as a resident and neighbor, that you should always keep in mind. These include but are not limited to:

Respect for your neighbors

Keep in mind that, just like you, your neighbors have the right to comfortable, safe and peaceful enjoyment of their apartments and the rest of the development.

- ***Noise:*** City of Cambridge ordinance sets strict limits on noise levels between 10 PM and 7 AM. Your lease also prohibits you from disturbing others' right to peaceful enjoyment of their homes or development grounds. Regardless of the hour, please be considerate and reduce the noise level of activities and electronic devices while on the premises.

- ***Household members and guests:*** You are responsible for the behavior of all household members and guests. Disruptions and criminal behavior by household members or guests are

violations of your lease and may result in eviction. You will be charged for any damage or vandalism caused by any household member or guest. Please note that loitering or congregating in front and back entrances, stairways, and hallways is prohibited.

- ***Building Security:*** CHA only gives keys and fobs to the head or co-head of household to help ensure that only residents can enter CHA buildings. Any requests for keys or fobs for individuals not listed on a household's lease will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

  Each building or development has a schedule for locking outside doors and other common entries. When the door is locked, please cooperate by making sure the door stays locked. **Never prop the door open. Never "buzz" someone that you do not know into the building**. This is a serious safety matter for you and your neighbors.

  Burned out interior and exterior hallway light bulbs should be reported to the management office right away. Your safety and security depend on proper lighting.

Housekeeping

You are responsible for maintaining a safe and sanitary apartment and for cleaning/clearing other areas assigned for your exclusive use (for example, front and backyards). In family developments, you and your neighbors are responsible for cleaning front and back entrances, hallways and stairways. You are also responsible for properly preparing your apartment for scheduled extermination services. Please refer to the housekeeping booklet in the back pocket of this folder for a more detailed description of CHA standards and maintenance charges.

- ***Mold:*** In order to minimize the occurrence of mold growth, you are asked to remove any visible moisture accumulation on walls, windows, floors and bathroom fixtures. You should also use exhaust fans in kitchens and bathrooms, if available, or open windows to provide ventilation and prevent excessive moisture accumulation.

  Please do not boil water to increase humidity in your apartment. This wastes energy and contributes to mold growth. Mold may lead to repertory illnesses, particularly in children and the elderly.

- ***Trash and recycling***: Please follow the trash disposal and recycling procedures for your development. These are found on your individual development sheet in the back pocket of this folder.

  Trash must be regularly disposed of in closed plastic bags. Hypodermic needles must always be capped and discarded in a protective container. Improper trash disposal will result in a maintenance charge.

Rental Insurance

The Cambridge Housing Authority does not reimburse tenants for personal property damaged by events that are beyond our control. CHA strongly recommends that tenants purchase rental insurance to protect their personal items.

Personal Property Damages

The CHA is not liable for damages or loss of property that is: stolen, damaged or destroyed by fire or water, defective refrigeration, etc., not caused by CHA negligence.

Utilities

Residents of family developments must notify utility companies (e.g., electric) of their new address before moving into the development.

In most senior/disabled buildings, utilities are supplied by CHA. However, residents pay a nominal monthly fee for electricity if they install an air conditioner in their apartment.

Gas appliances

Strict safety precautions for the use and installation of gas appliances MUST be followed. Never disconnect your stove for any purpose. If you believe that your stove or oven is in need of repair, please notify the management office. If you suspect a gas leak after hours, **please call 9-1-1 immediately**.

Use a LICENSED plumber for installing gas dryers (where permitted). The plumber must obtain a City of Cambridge gas permit prior to the installation, and a copy of that permit must be on file in the management office before the plumber begins working.

Saving Energy

Energy costs are the CHA's single largest operating expense. Please cooperate with CHA's conservation program by trying to save

energy whenever you can. For example, you can easily conserve energy by:

- Keeping all exterior doors and windows tightly shut during the heating season.
- Turning out lights in rooms that you are not using.
- Conserving hot water whenever possible.
- Turning the heat down (but never completely off) at night and while out (if you have your own thermostat).
- Removing your window air conditioners at the end of the summer.

Every dollar saved by using energy more efficiently is another dollar that can go into improvements at your development like painting and landscaping.

Mail

Please put your name and the name of anyone else on your lease who receives mail in or on your mailbox. Names must be visible and legible to ensure that everyone in your household receives their mail in a timely manner. The post office **will not** deliver mail to any individual whose name is not listed in or on the mailbox.

Pets

No dogs, cats or other animals may be kept in your apartment, except birds in cages and fish in aquariums. Residents of senior/disabled-designated buildings are exempted from this provision, but are subject to the pet rules in place at their specific buildings.

Disabled tenants may request a reasonable accommodation if they require the use of a service animal. Written documentation must be presented and approved by the CHA Reasonable Accommodation officer at 675 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02139.

4. Public Safety

Security

If a crime or serious trouble occurs, **call the police immediately** by dialing **9-1-1**. For non-emergencies such as loitering, loud music, or other minor disturbances, please call the police using the **Cambridge Police Department's main number: 617-349-3300**. Please also notify the management office during regular business hours.

CHA is working hard to keep its housing developments safe and secure places to live. The Housing Authority employs a Public Safety Administrator who is responsible for coordinating anti-crime efforts with the Cambridge Police Department. To this end, the Public Safety Administrator meets on a regular basis with members of the Cambridge Police Department to discuss any criminal activity at CHA developments.

The Public Safety Administrator can be reached at 617-520-6208. Call the Public Safety Administrator anytime you want to report or discuss minor crimes or non-emergency situations that are impacting

the safety and comfort of your family or your neighbors. All calls to the Public Safety Administrator are confidential.

Resident involvement is essential to keeping your home a safe and pleasant place to live. There are many things that you can do to safeguard your home. For example, you are responsible for keeping your apartment door locked. Your door should never be left propped open, even if you are expecting a guest, doing laundry, or simply checking your mail.

Drugs and Alcohol

There is absolutely no drinking of alcoholic beverages allowed in public areas. Under public drinking laws, the Cambridge Police have the authority to arrest individuals drinking on CHA property. Remember that you are responsible for the activity of your household members and guests, too.

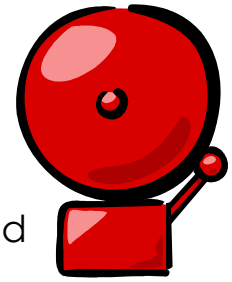
The Cambridge Housing Authority has a strict **ZERO TOLERANCE** policy with respect to illegal drugs. Any illegal drug use or activity by you, another household member, or guests in your apartment or in common areas will result in criminal complaints and speedy eviction, as allowed under federal and state regulation.

If you believe that someone is dealing drugs or using them in public places like hallways, basements, or play areas, please call the police

drug hotline at 617-349-3359. All calls to the hotline are anonymous. You can report drug crimes without having to give your name or any other contact information. Your name and number will not be recorded. You should also report this type of information to your property manager. Our managers work closely with the police and the CHA Public Safety Administrator to address problems related to drug use or dealing at CJHA developments.

Fire Safety

If you live in a building with elevators, fire safety tips and escape routes are posted throughout the building. Please DO NOT take fire alarms lightly! Always evacuate unless you have been notified before hand that testing is underway. Where required by law, CHA has installed smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your apartment. If the carbon monoxide detector in your apartment goes off, contact the manager immediately. If it occurs after business hours, immediately contact 9-1-1. **Remember:** never tamper with or disable the smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your apartment-they have been installed to save your life. If you think that yours are malfunctioning, please contact your manager immediately-**your safety may depend upon it!**



Please see the Fire Emergency Procedure handout in this folder for instructions on what to do if there is a fire in your building.

Sprinkler heads are in each room in most Elderly apartments. Never hang clothing or other items on the sprinkler head or tamper with it in any way. Serious flooding will occur if the sprinkler head is set off and you will be responsible for any water damage you cause.

Household Safety: Please observe the following precautions:

(1) Federal and state inspection standards require that the **electrical panels** in your apartment remain visible and accessible at all times. They cannot be covered or blocked in any way.

(2) Tenants living on the first 3 floors of any building, whether a townhouse, walk-up, or high rise, must have at least **two accessible ways out of each room**. This means that if a room has one window and one door, neither can be blocked (for example, by an air conditioner or furniture).

(3) To avoid **tripping hazards**, please make sure that cables, wires and extension cords stay along the walls--never run them across rooms or hallways. In apartments equipped with emergency pull cords, the cords must be accessible at all times. Tenants are prohibited from tying or blocking emergency pull cords in any way.

(4) Under no circumstances should you tamper with or remove a smoke detector, a carbon monoxide detector or your thermostat.

5. Getting Involved

Tenant Council

At your development there may be an organization run by residents to represent residents' viewpoint and ideas. Any adult resident of a CHA development (18 years or older and listed on the lease) is automatically a member of the tenant council. You can attend meetings, make suggestions, run for office, or participate in many other ways. If you do not know whether your development has an active council, you can check with the management office.

Council Activities

In most cases, officers and members of each tenant council meet with the manager to discuss specific problems or concerns, or to assist in planning modernization activities and development budgets. Usually councils "get the word out" by posting flyers or announcements of events that may be of special interest to public housing residents. CHA may assist resident councils in this process.

Additionally, many councils sponsor educational and social events within their developments. Contact the resident council at your development if you have any suggestions or ideas. Your input and participation are important, helpful, and appreciated.

For more general information about resident councils and their activities, you may contact the **CHA Tenant Liaison** at **617-520-6412.**

Alliance of Cambridge Tenants (ACT)

ACT is a group that brings together public housing residents and Section 8 voucher holders to stay informed about, and evaluate CHA policies and procedures. Residents interested in participating in ACT activities can contact them by phone at 617-499-7031 or 617-825-9750. ACT can also be contacted by mail at:

Alliance of Cambridge Tenants
P. O. Box 391078
Cambridge, MA 02139

6. Resident Services

Service Coordination

In senior/younger disabled designated developments, service coordinators (similar to social workers) are available to assist residents by providing advocacy, information, referrals, casework, assistance in applying for public benefits, and counseling. Please refer to the list of services in your specific development for the name and phone number of your coordinator.

Adult Services

A wide range of educational and economic development services is available to Cambridge public housing tenants. For information on any of the following programs, please contact the Director of Tenant Services at 617-520-6246.

- **Gateways Adult Basic Education Program**: English-for-Speakers-of Other-Languages (ESOL), GED and basic literacy classes, all supplemented with computer instruction.

  LOCATION: Jefferson Park

  CONTACT: 617-497-4411 or 617-349-6370

- **Bridge-to-College Program for Adults**: "Brush-up" classroom math and English literacy instruction, study skills workshops, individual counseling and college application assistance to adult high school graduates and GED-holders who wish to access post-secondary education but may not feel quite prepared academically.

  LOCATION: Community Learning Center, 19 Brookline St.

  CONTACT: 617-349-6365

- **Computer Centers:** Two computer centers (available to adults and children), at Jefferson Park and 119 Windsor St. (Washington Elms/Newtowne Ct.) provide training in basic computer operation, giving residents of all ages ready access to computers for educational purposes, professional development and personal use.

  LOCATION: Jefferson Park & 119 Windsor St.

  CONTACT: Windsor St Lab: 617-349-6360/ JP Lab: 617-497-4411 or 617-349-6370

- **Career Counseling:** Vocational case management and counseling (including referrals for related social, educational and training services), scholarships for job training, job preparation, assistance with job placement and follow-up assistance after job placement.

  LOCATION: Cambridge Employment Prog., 51 Inman St.

  CONTACT: 617-349-6070

- **Outreach:** Informational campaign (door-to-door and through periodic mailings) to make Cambridge public housing residents aware of the educational and economic development services of the authority.
  CONTACT: 617-520-6246

- **Tenant Organizing:** Support to resident organizations in defining mission, developing by-laws, holding elections, planning meetings and activities; provide on-going support to councils once they are organized.
  LOCATION: On-site at all CHA developments
  CONTACT: 617-520-6412

Child and Youth Services

A number of award-wining programs are available to children and caretakers who live in public housing. For information on any of the following programs, please contact the Director of Tenant Services at 617-520-6246.

- **The Work Force**: Five-year long program providing adolescents starting in 8th grade, with after-school life skills classes, "try-out" mentored employment and academic supports including: monitoring of school attendance/performance; staffed, computer-equipped homework help centers; individual tutoring; MCAS Prep

classes; Summer Literacy Camp and school-year literacy-building activities; college prep and admissions assistance; scholarships for post-secondary education.

LOCATION: Jefferson Park, Roosevelt Towers, 119 Windsor St.

CONTACT: 617-520-6350

- **Caretaker/Child Literacy Activity Groups** – Weekly activity-based groups in family developments for parents/caretakers and their children ages 0 – 5 to teach about child development, early literacy development and develop peer support networks.

  LOCATION: Various family developments.

  CONTACTS: CCRC – 617-547-1063/Agenda for Children – 617-665-3827

- **Head Start/Daycare** – Head Start classrooms, at Jefferson Park, Roosevelt Towers and at 119 Windsor St, some of which function as full-day childcare facilities.

  CONTACT: 617-623-1392, x111

- **Parents ROCK (*Reading On Computers with Kids*):** Ten-week Saturday AM program (run 3 times/yr) introducing parents and their 4 to 7 year old children to literacy-building computer programs and to ways in which caretakers can support the development of early literacy in the home.

  LOCATION: 119 Windsor St.

CONTACT: 617-665-3827

- **Boys & Girls Club** – After-school and evening recreational and educational support programming for children ages 6 – 19 during the academic year and evening activities for teens and summer camp for children ages 6 – 12 during the summer.

  LOCATION: 119 Windsor St.

  CONTACT: 617-499-7015

- **Community Art Center** – Offers two programs: 1) Arts-oriented childcare program serving children ages 5-12 with a comprehensive, year-round program that includes after school programming on Monday-Friday and full-day programs during school vacations and throughout the summer; sliding fee scale; meals/snacks provided, as well as transportation; 2) Teen Media Program offers seven-week units for teenagers after school throughout the spring, summer, and fall sessions in video production, photography, and sound.
- **Location:** 119 Windsor St.
- **Contact:** 617-868-7100

In Closing

We hope that this Resident Handbook is a useful guide for information and advice about living at CHA's developments. We hope that it answers many of the questions you have about your apartment and community. Keep it in a convenient place and use it as a reference when you have questions.

There are also several separate information sheets accompanying this booklet. Among other important topics, the sheets describe the regulations and practices that specifically apply to your development. By knowing more about your surroundings, you and your neighbors can join with CHA in creating a comfortable and enjoyable environment for everyone. Remember, your community is as good as you and your neighbors want it to be!

Important Contacts

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS THAT MAY ASSIST YOU

Health Emergencies	
Ambulance	9-1-1
Fire Department	
Emergencies	9-1-1
General Information	617-349-4900
Police Department	
Emergencies	9-1-1
Non-emergencies	617-349-3300
Drug Hotline:	617-349-3359
Domestic Violence Liaison	617-349-3371
Other	
Cambridge Housing Authority	617-864-3020
Public Safety Administrator	617-520-6208
Cambridge Dept. of Human Services	617-349-6200
Council on Aging	617-349-6220
Multi-Service Center	617-349-6340
Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services	617-603-2700
Cambridge City Hall	617-349-4900
Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee	617-868-2900
Cambridge Hospital	617-665-1000
Cambridge Public Library	617-349-4040
Cambridge Public School Department	617-349-6400
- School Closing Information Line	617-349-6513

Community Legal Services and Counseling Center	617-661-1010
Harvard Tenant Advocacy Project	617-495-4394
Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance	617-348-8500
Massachusetts Department of Social Services	617-748-2000
Massachusetts Department of Mental Health	617-626-4800
Poison Control Hotline	1-800-222-1222
Social Security Administration	1-800-772-1213
Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services	617-628-2601
- Elder Abuse Hotline	1-800-922-2275
Statewide Domestic Violence Hotline	1-877-785-2020

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