

2025 Annual Report – Executive Summary

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The Office of Housing Stability (OHS) works to prevent the involuntary displacement of Somerville residents facing eviction or otherwise at risk of losing housing, to rehouse residents who need to relocate, and to advance policies and programs that combat displacement and strengthen tenants’ rights. In 2025, OHS received 1,185 unique referrals and opened 1,047 cases for services.

What OHS Does

Residents come to OHS for help with eviction notices, unaffordable rent increases, landlord-tenant conflicts, housing search barriers, recertification issues, reasonable accommodation needs, homelessness, and questions about tenant rights.

OHS responds through direct case support, legal referrals, rental assistance coordination, landlord negotiation, housing search help, affordable housing applications, shelter placement support, community education, and policy advocacy. OHS also develops programs to plug crucial gaps in the homelessness prevention and service delivery system.

Who OHS Served

The households served by OHS reflect the diversity of Somerville and the unequal impact of housing instability. Hispanic/Latine residents make up about 11% of Somerville’s population but represented 31% of OHS clients. Black/African American residents make up about 4.5% of the city’s population but represented 14% of OHS clients.

Language access is central to the work: 42% of households primarily speak a language other than English at home, and about 30% need interpreter support. Among households with known income data, 27% reported monthly income under \$1,000 or no income at all.

A City Under Housing Pressure

Renters make up roughly two-thirds of Somerville households. Many residents have little room in their budgets for a sudden loss of income, medical expense, rent increase, or an emergency. Among Somerville’s extremely low-income renters, 81% are cost burdened.

In 2025, there were 351 eviction filings and 67 executions for possession in Somerville. The fact that 81% of eviction filings did not reach the final court stage of physical removal suggests that even after a case is filed in court, timely intervention can help many households avoid the most severe outcomes.

Why Early Intervention Matters

Most eviction filings in Somerville were related to non-payment of rent. In 2025, 71% of filings were for nonpayment, and the median amount owed in those cases was \$3,616. In many cases, timely rental assistance, legal support, landlord negotiation, and case management can prevent a temporary setback from turning into homelessness or long-term displacement.

Eviction pressure was also geographically concentrated. East Somerville (02145) accounted for 58% of eviction filings and 54% of executions citywide. East Somerville residents also made up the largest share of OHS clients, representing 47% of households served.

How Somerville Stands Out

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

16% vs. 4.8%

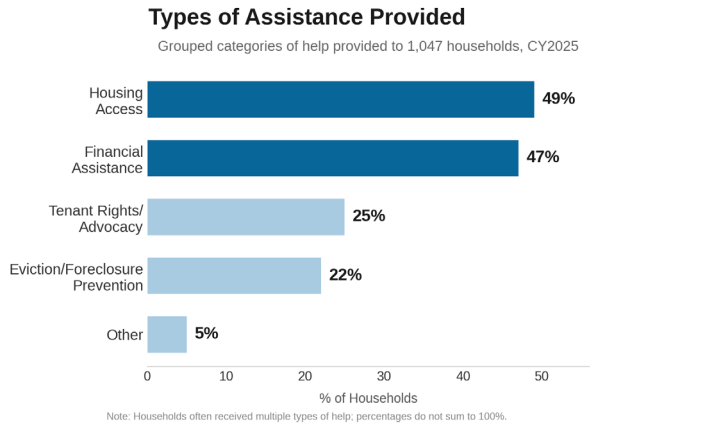
Somerville’s rate of legal representation of tenants facing eviction was more than 3x the statewide average and the highest among comparable nearby cities.

Eviction cases show a significant power imbalance between landlords and tenants. In 2025, 94% of landlords in Somerville eviction cases had attorneys, compared with only 16% of tenants. OHS’s investment in legal partnerships helps narrow that gap by connecting residents to legal aid clinics that screen cases, provide full or limited representation, negotiate agreements, assert tenant rights, represent tenants in motions or at trial, and help seal eligible eviction records, all to avoid unnecessary displacement.

Flexible rental assistance is another key part of Somerville’s eviction prevention system. In 2025, Somerville’s Flex-SAHTF and Flex SomerVIP rental assistance programs supported 270 households with \$1,850,989 in assistance, mostly to pay rental arrears and short-term prospective rent to prevent displacement.

What Help Was Provided

OHS services span five broad categories. Many households received more than one type of help, so categories overlap.

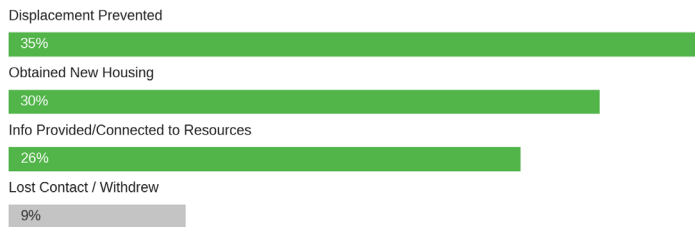


The chart above reflects assistance provided across all OHS cases. OHS data shows that service needs varied by both eviction stage and household income. As households moved further into the eviction process, financial assistance needs increased, underscoring the importance of early intervention. Income also shaped the type of support needed as moderate- and higher-income households more often sought brief advice or tenant-rights guidance, while extremely low-income and low-income households more often required comprehensive stabilization support, including financial assistance, legal coordination, housing search, benefits connections, and intensive case management.

What Happened

Thirty percent of households (317 cases) received full case management: ongoing, intensive support from a case manager, coordinated services, and sustained work toward housing stability, sometimes over years. The remaining 70% received brief services - advice, information, referrals, or short-term help - that resolved their challenge without full case management.

Outcomes for Full Case Management Cases



Among the 225 closed cases, each outcome reflects intensive, sustained work:

- **Displacement Prevented:** Stayed in their homes through rental assistance, landlord negotiation, legal support, and case management.
- **Obtained New Housing:** Secured new, stable housing through housing search, applications, and start-up costs.
- **Info/Resources Provided:** Received substantive help - completing applications, rights education, connections to ongoing support - that advanced their stability.
- **Lost Contact/Withdrew:** Became unreachable or withdrew before an outcome could be documented.

For more than 90% of these households, OHS prevented displacement, secured new housing, or provided substantive stabilizing resources.

A note on brief services
These outcomes cover only the 225 closed full case management cases. The 70% handled through brief services - rapid triage, rights guidance, warm handoffs - are not counted here but often require substantial expertise and advocacy to keep problems from escalating.

OHS Programs: Somerville’s Local Safety Net

Beyond rental assistance, legal services, and tenant organizing, OHS builds programs to fill gaps that direct service work reveals:

Municipal Voucher Program Deep local subsidy for residents barred from federal programs; 30 households stabilized since 2024.	
Guaranteed Basic Income Pilot 198 households received \$750/month through July 2025; 80% used it for housing or rent.	Emergency Displacement Program Short-term hotel placement after fire or emergency; 20 households served, average stay 22.1 nights.
Older Adult Bridge Subsidy First-in-state pilot helping residents 60+ stay housed while awaiting affordable housing.	Workshops & Community Education Tenant rights, affordable housing, applications, and organizing support.

Looking Ahead

The 2025 data shows that emergency assistance is essential, but it cannot solve Somerville’s housing affordability challenges on its own. Many residents come to OHS with immediate crises, such as eviction notices, rental arrears, unaffordable rent increases, building sales, or loss of housing. However, those crises are often rooted in deeper structural pressures including high rents, low incomes, limited affordable housing, language barriers, disability-related needs, and unequal access to legal support.

OHS’s work shows that early, coordinated intervention can make a meaningful difference. In nonpayment cases, well-timed assistance can stabilize households before debt grows. In other cases, where staying in place is not possible or not in the household’s best interest, OHS helps residents identify safer, more affordable, or more accessible housing options.

Looking ahead, Somerville will need continued investment in the full range of housing stability tools: flexible rental assistance, legal services, language access, affordable housing pathways, emergency shelter support, and policies that prevent displacement before it occurs.

Policy and Program Priorities

OHS uses patterns from direct service work to design new programs and set policy priorities - the Municipal Voucher Program (above) is one example, shaped by the language-access needs and affordability data in this report.

OHS also supports local and statewide policy efforts that expand affordable housing resources and strengthen tenant protections. These include eviction record sealing, access to counsel, tenant opportunity to purchase, rent stabilization, real estate transfer fee legislation, older adult bridge subsidy program, early leasing protections, condominium conversion protections, and notice of building sale requirements.

Ongoing policy changes with potential cuts to permanent supportive housing, restrictions on housing benefits for mixed-status families, freezes on new vouchers, and new work requirements or time limits increases pressure on local housing stability systems and reduce access to housing support for vulnerable residents. As federal and state resources shrink, local programs and partnerships become even more important.

The 2025 Annual Report shows both the scale of housing instability in Somerville and the impact of coordinated, early, and sustained intervention. OHS helps residents navigate immediate crises while also building the programs, partnerships, and policies needed to keep Somerville residents stably and affordably housed over the long term.

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