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Friday, September 16, 2022
9:30 AM

September 2022

Martha's Vineyard Humanitarian Response

Update #4

Below please find a statement from the Governor Baker-Polito Administration.

“Baker-Polito Administration Announces Coordinated Support for Newly Arriving Families and Individuals to the Commonwealth *Emergency response plan includes temporary shelter and humanitarian services*

BARNSTABLE – Today, the Baker-Polito Administration announced new shelter and humanitarian supports at Joint Base Cape Cod (JBCC) for the approximately 50 migrants who arrived in Martha’s Vineyard this week. The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is coordinating efforts among state and local officials to ensure access to food, shelter and essential services for these men, women and children. Governor Charlie Baker also plans to activate up to 125 members of the Massachusetts National Guard as part of this relief effort.

Shortly after the arrival of these individuals, Martha’s Vineyard residents joined with local and state officials to create temporary shelter and provide necessities in a moment of urgent need. However, the island communities are not equipped to provide sustainable accommodation, and state officials developed a plan to deliver a comprehensive humanitarian response. On Friday, September 16, the Commonwealth will offer transportation to a new temporary shelter on JBCC. This move will be voluntary.

JBCC is a facility already designated by MEMA as an emergency shelter in Barnstable County, and its existing infrastructure provides a safe temporary accommodation appropriate for the needs of families and individuals. Additionally, the facility can provide dedicated space for access to legal services and other essential services such as basic healthcare. JBCC has historically housed and cared for displaced individuals, including Louisiana residents fleeing the

impact of Hurricane Katrina, as well as an alternative care medical site for Massachusetts residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to MEMA, the robust response of state and local agencies includes the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, the Massachusetts National Guard, the Massachusetts State Police, Dukes County and Barnstable County, as well as state, local and federal elected officials.

“We are grateful to the providers, volunteers and local officials that stepped up on Martha’s Vineyard over the past few days to provide immediate services to these individuals,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “Our Administration has been working across state government to develop a plan to ensure these individuals will have access to the services they need going forward, and Joint Base Cape Cod is well equipped to serve these needs.”

“The Baker-Polito Administration has been in close contact with providers and local officials on the ground in Martha’s Vineyard throughout this process,” said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. “We will continue to work with officials at all levels of government to make sure everyone has access to the appropriate resources, including shelter.”

“While Wednesday’s arrival on Martha’s Vineyard was unexpected, the extraordinary response was not,” said Public Safety and Security Secretary Terrence Reidy. “The work of so many state and local partners exemplify the best values of our Commonwealth, providing safe shelter, food and care for individuals that had been through a long harrowing journey.”

MEMA is collaborating with state agencies and non-profit organizations to ensure that individuals and families have access to a broad range of services, including legal, health care, food and other needs.

The individuals and families will be housed in dormitory-style spaces at JBCC, with separate spaces accommodating both individuals and families. Families will not be separated.

As part of the emergency planning process in any situation, state officials deploy a “wraparound” service approach which includes accommodation, clothing and hygiene kits, nutrition, needs assessment, and access to health care, mental health, and crisis counseling services. All services will be available in the recipient’s native language through interpreters.

The Administration is aware of many charitable individuals and organizations who wish to donate items to those in need. Please note that Joint Base Cape Cod is not logistically able to accept donations of any kind. MEMA is establishing a process to accept relief donations, and additional information is forthcoming.”

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