

Welcome to Massachusetts!

A Practical Guide to Living in the State

Massachusetts, located in the heart of New England, is the region's most populous state. Lively urban areas, picturesque seaside communities, and tiny rural towns offer a unique ambiance which each year attracts many new residents. This webpage is designed to provide people contemplating a move to Massachusetts and those who have recently come here with specific information on the practical aspects of residency. I hope that new residents and those considering a move to the Bay State find this webpage a good source of useful information.

Sincerely,
William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Residency

There is no formal procedure for establishing a legal residence in Massachusetts. Voter registration, automobile registration, a driver's license, the appearance of a person's name on a city or town street list, and rent, utility, mortgage or telephone bills normally provide tangible proof of residence. However, individual public or private agencies or institutions may have their own requirements for proof of residence. A one-year residency requirement is imposed in order to qualify for state tuition rates at state colleges and universities, and a six-month residency is required for community colleges.

Voter Registration

If you are a U.S. citizen, a Massachusetts resident, and you will be 18 years old on or before election day, you may register to vote at any city or town hall in person, or by mail, by contacting any city or town clerk's office. Social service, welfare, Registry of Motor Vehicle offices, and offices providing services for the disabled also have walk-in registration services available. Colleges, universities, high schools, and vocational schools will have registration availability for enrolled students. Registration in Massachusetts is permanent, but you must register again if you move or change your name. For more information contact:
Elections Division

Offices of the Secretary of the Commonwealth
One Ashburton Place, 17th floor
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 727-2828
<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/>

Automobiles, Motorcycles

Driver's License (Class D)

If you have a valid license to drive from any state in the U.S. or province of Canada, you are not required to take a written test or driving test to obtain a Massachusetts license. You are, however, required to take a written examination if the out-of-state license has been expired for more than 1 year. At a branch office of the Registry of Motor Vehicles, you may fill out an application form and make an appointment to take

the written exam. If you pass the exam and an eye test, a photo license will be issued. The total cost is \$75 (regardless of whether any exam is required) and it is valid for five years. For more information, contact:

Registry of Motor Vehicles
630 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02111
(617) 351-4500
Toll-free: 1-800-858-3926 (351, 413, 508, 774, 978 area codes)
www.mass.gov/rmv

Registration

Massachusetts residents are required to register their cars and motorcycles. You may do so at any branch office of the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Proof of ownership must be presented, in the form of the title to your car. If you come from a state that does not require titles, a bill of sale or a past registration will be accepted. Prior to registering your car or motorcycle, you will also need insurance certification issued by a licensed Massachusetts insurance company, indicating that your car is insured in accordance with Massachusetts laws. Registration costs \$36 for two years. Note: Application for a Massachusetts title must be made at this time. The cost is \$50.

For more information, visit the Registry website, at:
<http://www.mass.gov/rmv/regs/>

Inspection

Within seven days after registering your car in Massachusetts, you must have it inspected at any gas station or automobile repair shop that has been certified by the Registry of Motor Vehicles as an official inspection station.

An inspection maintenance program requires both a yearly safety and emissions level inspection of motor vehicles. Motor vehicles that are more than 15 years old, that have a maximum speed of 25 m.p.h. or less, that have a diesel engine, that have a registered weight of 8,500 pounds or more, are motorcycles, or are new vehicles being registered for the first time are exempt from the emissions part of the inspection.

The fee for a combined safety and emissions inspection or a safety only inspection is \$29.

For further information, visit the Registry website at:

www.mass.gov/rmv/stations

Seat Belts (M.G.L. ch. 90, s. 13A)

All passengers in vehicles must wear seat belts. Violators must pay a \$25 fine if a driver is stopped for another motor vehicle infraction and an officer finds that any passenger is not wearing a seat belt. Under the combined safety and emissions inspection regulations, safety belts are required for motor vehicles where such safety belts were installed as original equipment. In addition, each passenger over 16 years of age not properly fastened in will be fined individually. Under the Child Passenger Safety Law, M.G.L. ch. 90, s. 7AA, children five years old and younger and who weigh less than 40 lbs. are mandated to ride in a car seat. Children weighing more than 40 lbs. but under age five must ride in a booster seat until they

reach 80 lbs. Children over the age and weight limits must be properly restrained with a seat belt. For more information, contact:

Injury Prevention and Control Program
Department of Public Health
250 Washington Street, 4th Floor
Boston, MA 02108-4619
Toll-free: 1-800-227-7233 (CAR-SAFE)
www.mass.gov/dph/bfchweb/factsheets/childpassenger.htm

To find a Child Passenger Safety Technician in MA and have your child's seat belt checked, call the Governor's Highway Safety Bureau's Child Passenger Safety Program at: 1-800-732-8243 or visit the website at: www.massghsb.com/detpages/programs55.html.

Sales Tax on Automobiles

If you move into Massachusetts within six months of purchasing a new or used car, you must pay either the full sales tax on the car or the difference between the Massachusetts sales tax and that of the state where the car was purchased. More specifically:

- a. If Massachusetts has reciprocity with the state and you have proof that the sales tax was paid in that state, you have only to pay the difference between the tax rates of the two states.
- b. If Massachusetts does not have reciprocity with the state where the car was purchased, then you must pay the full Massachusetts sales tax. No sales tax has to be paid if the car was purchased out of state more than six months prior to your move.

Department of Revenue
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 887-MDOR or
1-800-392-6089
www.dor.state.ma.us/rul_reg/tir/TIR_03_1.htm

Tax Structure

Personal Income Tax

A 5.3% tax is due on earned income from such sources as wages and salaries; unemployment compensation; alimony; Massachusetts bank interest; rents and royalty income; taxable pensions and annuity income IRA/Keogh distribution; profit or loss from a business or profession; winnings and prizes; unearned income such as dividends and interest (other than Massachusetts savings deposit interest). A 12% tax is due on capital gains, such as current-year short-term (including collectibles or long-term collectibles), and pre-1996 installment sales.

A declaration of estimated tax must be filed by those who expect to receive more than \$500 of income subject to Massachusetts taxation which is not subject to Massachusetts withholding.

For more information, visit the department's website at:
www.dor.state.ma.us/help/guides/abate_amend/personal/Issues/RatesTax.htm

Sales and Use Tax

A 5 percent tax on the retail sale of all items is charged unless exempted by statute. A 5 percent tax on tangible personal property which is used or stored in Massachusetts and upon which a sales tax has not been paid must be paid. Exemptions include food, clothing up to a value of \$175, fuel for heating, newspapers, and prescription drugs. In addition, there is a sales tax on telecommunications services, utilities, and energy (including non-residential electricity, gas, steam, and heating fuel).

For further inquiries, visit the Department of Revenue's website at:

www.dor.state.ma.us/help/guides/abate_amend/personal/Issues/usetax.htm

Sales Tax on Meals

A 5 percent tax on restaurant and take-out meals is charged.

Further material can be found at this website:

www.dor.state.ma.us/rul_reg/reg/830CMR64H-6-5.htm

Gasoline Tax

A tax of \$.21 on the retail price per gallon is charged.

Contact the Department of Revenue at (617) 887-5070 for further assistance or visit their website at:

www.dor.state.ma.us/business/taxguide/MotorFuelsExcise.htm

Cigarette Tax (M.G.L. ch. 64C, s. 7B)

The Health Protection Fund, voted into law in the 1992 state election, and amended in 1996, provides money for existing health programs and to create new smoking prevention projects. The fund is supported by a surtax per package on cigarettes. This tax is added on top of the sales tax of 5 percent on the total cost of cigarettes. In 2002, the tax was increased to \$1.51 for a package of 20, or \$15.31 for a ten-package carton, 30% of the price paid for cigars and smoking tobacco products by retailers; and 90% of the price paid by wholesalers on smokeless tobacco products. For more information, call the Cigarette Excise Unit of the Department of Revenue at (617) 887-5090, or visit their website at:

www.dor.state.ma.us/cigarette/cigarette.htm

Alcoholic Beverages Tax (M.G.L. ch. 138, s. 21)

A tax on alcoholic beverages is charged based on alcoholic content. For more information, contact the Department of Revenue: (617) 887-5120 or visit their site at:

www.dor.state.ma.us/business/taxguide/alcohol.htm

Automobile Excise Tax

An annual tax levied by the state but collected at the local level. The rate is \$25 per thousand dollars of the car's value, as determined by the manufacturer's list price (without options) in the year of manufacture. The tax is figured according to the percentage of the list price. The percentages are as follows:

Year preceding the designated year of manufacture 50%
Year of designated manufacture 90%
Second year 60%
Third year 40%
Fourth year 25%
Fifth and subsequent years 10%

Call the Department of Revenue for more information, at (617) 626-2300 or visit these websites:

www.dls.state.ma.us/ptb/faq/faq2.htm or
www.dls.state.ma.us/ptb/pdfs/question2add.pdf

Estate Tax

The Massachusetts Estate Tax exemption is equal to that of the federal government. For 2003, estates of \$700,000 or less are not subject to an estate tax, thus making the tax inapplicable to most estates. However, should an estate be over the exemption amount, the full value will be subject to the estate tax, not merely the difference between the estate's value and the \$700,000 exemption. Nevertheless, estates passing on to surviving spouses are not subject to the tax, regardless of the value, but will be taxed upon the death of the surviving spouse. For 2004, the amount will increase to \$850,000, and to \$950,000 for 2005. After that it will remain at \$1 million. For more information, contact:

Estate Tax Unit
Department of Revenue
200 Arlington Street, Room 4300
Chelsea, MA 02150
(617) 887-6930
www.dor.state.ma.us/forms/est_tax/est_tax.htm

For more information on taxes in general, contact:

Department of Revenue
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 887-MDOR (6367)
1-800-392-6089 (In MA)
www.dor.state.ma.us/help/taxhelp.htm

Licenses and Permits

Marriage

The legal age to marry in Massachusetts is 18 (M.G.L. ch. 207, s. 33A). All people who marry in the state must have a marriage license issued in Massachusetts by any city or town clerk (M.G.L. ch. 207, s. 28).

Fishing/Hunting

State licenses are required for all persons, age 15 or over, to hunt or fish in any inland waters. Licenses are issued by a city or town clerk or the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. For more information, contact:

Department of Fish and Game
251 Causeway Street, 1st floor
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 626-1590
[http://www.sport.state.ma.us/
mass.outdoors@state.ma.us](http://www.sport.state.ma.us/mass.outdoors@state.ma.us)

Boats and Recreational Vehicles

All boats with engines and other recreational vehicles such as snowmobiles and trail bikes must be registered with the Division of Law Enforcement. This can be done either at one of the regional offices or in the Boston office. For more information, contact:

Division of Law Enforcement
Department of Fish and Game
251 Causeway Street, Suite 101
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 626-1610
www.mass.gov/dfwele/dle/elereg.htm

Drinking Age (M.G.L. ch. 312, acts of 1984)

The legal drinking age in Massachusetts is 21. Proper identification is a Massachusetts driver's license or a liquor purchase identification card issued by the Registry of Motor Vehicles. For more information, contact the Registry at (617) 351-4500 or visit their website at:
www.mass.gov/rmv/license/13liqID.htm.

Gun Laws (M.G.L. ch. 140, s. 131 and ch. 269 s. 10, 12B & 14)

In 1998, Massachusetts enacted some of the toughest gun control laws in the country. These laws have significantly changed requirements regarding the purchase, possession, carrying, storage, and licensing of firearms. This summary highlights a few of the key points. However, it in no way sets forth all of the obligations and rights of individuals with regard to firearms laws.

Local police departments have the authority to issue gun permits. Such permits include licenses to carry (L.T.C.) and firearm identification cards (F.I.D.). There are two types of licenses to carry. A Class A license to carry allows an individual to purchase, possess and carry large-capacity handguns, rifles, shotguns and feeding devices. A Class A license to carry is the only permit that authorizes a holder to carry a concealed and loaded firearm. A Class B license to carry permits a holder to purchase, possess, and carry non-large capacity handguns and large-capacity rifles and shotguns.

There are also two types of firearm identification cards. Unrestricted firearm identification cards allow for the possession of non-large capacity rifles and shotguns. The restricted version of the card is available solely for the possession of chemical sprays.

Massachusetts gun laws require that all firearms, rifles, and shotguns be stored in a secured, locked container or equipped with a tamper resistant mechanical lock or other safety devices properly engaged as to render the weapon inoperable by unlawful users. Moreover, every firearm and large capacity

weapon sold in the Commonwealth must be equipped with a safety device (trigger lock) designed to prevent its discharge by an unauthorized user.

New residents have 60 days to obtain proper licenses. Non-residents may obtain temporary licenses to carry through the Firearms Record Bureau in order to possess and transport firearms through the Commonwealth. All non-residents must comply with all Massachusetts laws regarding transportation and storage while in the Commonwealth.

No one may possess, transport or store any type of gun in a building or on the grounds of any school without prior authorization by the board in charge of the school.

For more information please contact your local police department or:

Firearms Records Bureau
Criminal History Systems Board
200 Arlington Street, Suite 2200
Chelsea, MA 02150
(617) 660-4780
www.mass.gov/chsb/frb/frb_faqs.html

To check for any criminal records, contact:

Criminal History Systems Board
Executive Office of Public Safety
200 Arlington Street, Suite 2000
Chelsea, MA 02150
(617) 660-4600
Fax: (617) 660-4613
<http://www.mass.gov/chsb/>

Professions and Trades

Boards of Registration

Licenses are required for certain professions and trades in Massachusetts. State licenses are issued by the following Boards of Registration:

Allied Health Professions (Athletic Trainers, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists), Allied Mental Health and Human Service Professionals (Marriage and Family Therapists, Rehabilitation Counselors, Mental Health Counselors), Architects, Barbers, Chiropractors, Cosmetologists, Dieticians and Nutritionists, Dispensing Opticians, Drinking Water Supply Facility Operators, Electricians, Electrologists, Embalming and Funeral Directors, Engineers and Land Surveyors, Health Officers, Hearing Instrument Specialists, Home Inspectors, Landscape Architects, Medicine, Optometry, Physician Assistants, Plumbers and Gasfitters, Podiatry, Psychology, Public Accountancy, Radio and Television Technicians, Real Estate Appraisers, Real Estate Brokers and Salesmen, Sanitarians, Social Workers, Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, and Veterinary Medicine.

For more information contact:

Division of Professional License
Boards of Registration
239 Causeway Street, Suite 500

Boston, MA 02114
(617) 727-3074
<http://www.mass.gov/dpl/>

For Dental Examiners, Nursing, Nursing Home Administrators, Perfusionists, Pharmacists, Physician Assistants, and Respiratory Care Therapists, contact:

Department of Public Health
Division of Health Professions Licensure
239 Causeway Street, Suite 500
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 727-8267
www.mass.gov/dph/boards/index.htm

Teachers

Teachers and other professional education personnel must be certified by the Department of Education. For more information, contact:

Teacher Certification and Placement Bureau
Department of Education
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148
(781) 338-6635
www.doe.mass.edu/educators/e_license.html

Lawyers

If you have been practicing in another state for five years or more and have a Massachusetts lawyer to vouch for you, you can be sworn in by the Supreme Judicial Court. If you have been practicing for less than five years, you will have to take the bar examination administered by the Board of Bar Examiners. For more information, contact:

Board of Bar Examiners
77 Franklin Street
Boston, MA 02110
(617) 482-4466
<http://www.mass.gov/bbe>

Other Occupations

In addition to these occupations, many other occupations are licensed by the state or at the local level. Check with Citizen Information Service for further information.

Transportation

Highways

Massachusetts has 31,300 miles of highways including the Massachusetts Turnpike (Interstate 90) which stretches the length of the state connecting Massachusetts with upper New York state and roads that lead to Connecticut. Interstate 95, which circles Boston, runs the width of the state from Rhode Island to

New Hampshire. Interstate 93 connects Massachusetts with New Hampshire, and Interstate 91 connects western Massachusetts with Vermont and Connecticut.

For an official Massachusetts Transportation Map (limited supply) issued by the Massachusetts Highway Department, write:

Massachusetts Highway Department
10 Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116
(617) 973-7800
www.mhd.state.ma.us/mhd/home.htm

For a map of the Massachusetts Turnpike, contact:

Massachusetts Turnpike Authority
10 Park Plaza, Room 3510
Boston, MA 02116
(617) 973-7300
<http://www.massturnpike.com/>

Airport

Logan International Airport is the largest passenger and air cargo terminal in New England. It is located within the boundaries of Boston.

For more information, contact:

Logan International Airport
Massachusetts Port Authority
One Harborside Drive, Suite 200S
East Boston, MA 02128
(617) 428-2800
Toll free: 1-800-23-LOGAN
www.massport.com or the individual airlines.
For a directory of all airlines and terminals:

<http://www.massport.com/logan/airli.html>

For a listing of the 53 local airports, contact:

Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission
10 Park Plaza, Room 6620
Boston, MA 02116
(617) 973-8881
<http://www.massaeronautics.org/>

Trains

Boston is part of Amtrak's eastern corridor. Direct service is available to New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. For information on nationwide Amtrak service, contact them toll free at 1-800-872-7245 or visit their site at: www.amtrak.com.

Buses

Massachusetts is serviced by bus companies which operate in large communities out of Greyhound/Trailways Bus Terminals and by local companies in smaller communities. Check your telephone book for your local office or terminal.

Public Transportation

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority operates bus, trolley, trackless trolley, and rapid transit in 79 communities in the Greater Boston area. For MBTA maps and information, contact:

MBTA
10 Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116
(617) 222-5000
Toll-free: 1-800-392-6100
<http://www.mbta.com/>

Under the aegis of the MBTA, the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Railroad Company operates two commuter rail lines connecting Boston with various outlying suburbs.

Throughout the rest of the state there are 15 regional transportation authorities which provide public transportation for specific regions. For more information contact:

Executive Office of Transportation
10 Park Plaza, Suite 3170
Boston, MA 02116
(617) 973-7000
www.eot.state.ma.us/eot/facts/charts/facts_transitcontact.html

Education

Public Schools

Primary and secondary schools are under the control of cities and towns. The state mandates school attendance for children between the ages of 6 and 16 and requires school systems to operate kindergartens, but does not require children to attend them. According to state regulations a child who has turned six years of age must be enrolled in school (first grade) by the September following that birthday. For reports on public schools and school systems, contact:

School District Profiles
Department of Education
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148
(781) 338-DATA
<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>
<mailto:http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>

Private Schools

Information on private schools, such as accreditation, can be obtained from the following association:

New England Association of Schools and Colleges
209 Burlington Road
Bedford, MA 01730-1433
(781) 271-0022
<http://www.neasc.org/>

Higher Education

There are 121 institutions of higher learning, public and private, located in Massachusetts. The state institutions include 15 two-year community colleges, nine four-year state colleges, and five state university campuses. In addition, the state colleges include contains two schools with specialized curricula: Massachusetts Maritime Academy and the Massachusetts College of Art. The University of Massachusetts campuses are spread across Massachusetts, with the flagship campus in Amherst, the medical school in Worcester, as well as other campuses in Boston, Lowell, and Dartmouth has a main campus in Amherst, a Boston campus, a Lowell campus, a Dartmouth campus, and a medical school in Worcester. To be eligible for the resident tuition rate, the applicant must be able to indicate residency (physical presence) and twelve months domicile in Massachusetts with intent to stay prior to the date of entry into the state college or university (six months for community colleges).

Board of Higher Education
One Ashburton Place, Room 1401
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 994-6950
<http://www.mass.edu/>

Housing & Job Opportunities

Massachusetts' 351 communities offer housing in a variety of geographical settings. Cost and availability vary according to location. Employment opportunities are found in a wide range of manufacturing and commercial enterprises in such diverse fields as computer science, technological research, textile, and tourist industries. One of the best places to get information on the jobs and housing available in Massachusetts is the classified section of a local newspaper. For the greater Boston area, the most complete classifieds are available in the Sunday editions of The Boston Globe or The Boston Herald.

The Boston Globe
135 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02107
(617) 929-2000
<http://www.boston.com/news/globe/>

The Boston Herald
One Herald Square, P.O. Box 2096
Boston, MA 02106
(617) 426-3000
<http://www.bostonherald.com/>

The Massachusetts Division of Career Services assists applicants in obtaining permanent jobs. It maintains job-matching centers throughout the state for general employment placement. DCS also runs state-wide centers for job matching in specialized areas. You must apply in person. For more information, contact:

Division of Career Services
19 Staniford Street

Boston, MA 02114
(617) 626-5300
<http://www.detma.org/>

Helpful Hints

Doctors

To locate a doctor in your area, contact:

Massachusetts Medical Society
Waltham Woods Corporate Center
860 Winter Street
Waltham, MA 02451
(781) 893-4610
Toll-free: 1-800-322-2303
<http://www.massmed.org/>

You can also call local hospitals and ask for a list of physicians. To locate a specialist, call any teaching hospital (in Boston, Massachusetts General Hospital, Beth Israel Hospital, Brigham and Women's Hospital, and Tufts-New England Medical Center) and ask for the appropriate department for references.

To check the background, disciplinary history of a physician, or licensing/credentialing/complaint info, contact:

Board of Registration in Medicine
Department of Public Health
560 Harrison Avenue, Suite G4
Boston, MA 02118
(617) 654-9800
Physician Profiles: (617) 654-9830; Toll free: 1-800-377-0550
<http://www.massmedboard.org/>
ma.profiles@state.ma.us

Dentists

To locate a dentist in your area, contact:

Massachusetts Dental Society
2 Willow Street, Suite 200
Southborough, MA 01745
(508) 480-9797
Toll-free: 1-800-342-8747 (MA only)
Or 1-800-943-9200 (nationwide)
<http://www.massdental.org/>

Day Care

The Office of Child Care Services will provide lists of licensed day care facilities if you call or write:

Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services
600 Washington Street, 6th floor
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 988-6600
www.qualitychildcare.org

Childcare Resource & Referral
Toll-free: 1-800-345-0131

Return of Bottles

(M.G.L. ch. 94, s. 321-327 and 301 C.M.R. 4.00)

Glass, plastic, metal, aluminum and bi-metal containers holding beer and other malt beverages, carbonated soft drinks, and artificially carbonated mineral water are subject to mandatory deposit requirements. Wine, dairy products, natural fruit juices, and alcoholic beverages other than beer and malt are exempt.

The refund value is five cents, but in certain instances may be smaller. Empty containers may be returned to redemption centers or retail outlets which sell or have sold within the past 60 days the same brand, type and size of container. For more information, contact:

Bureau of Waste Prevention
Department of Environmental Protection
One Winter Street, 8th floor
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 556-1054
www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/files/bbillcon.htm

General Information

Official Name

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

State Capital

Boston

Population

6,349,097 (2000 U.S. Census Bureau)

Population Rank

13th of 50 states

Area

8,257 square miles (land and water)

Population Density

767.6 persons per square mile (land area)

Communities

302 towns; 49 cities

State Government

Six constitutional officers elected for four years: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the Commonwealth, Attorney General, Treasurer and Receiver General, Auditor

Legislature

Official Name: General Court. Two branches with members elected for two years; House of Representatives: 160 members; Senate: 40 members