



TOWN OF WESTFORD  
**BOARD OF HEALTH**  
TOWN HALL  
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### **Policy on Additions and Finishing Basements**

Effective July 1<sup>st</sup> 2008: As per The State Environmental Code 310 CMR 15.002, a **bedroom** is interpreted by the Westford Board of Health (BOH) to mean a room consisting of all of the following:

- (a) floor space of no less than 70 square feet;
- (b) for new construction, a ceiling height of no less than 7'3";
- (c) for existing houses and for mobile homes, a ceiling height of no less than 7'0";
- (d) an electrical service and ventilation; and
- (e) at least one window.

Rooms that do not consist of all of the above (a-e), living rooms, dining rooms and kitchens are not considered bedrooms, however they are still considered rooms towards your total room count. Bathrooms, hallways, unfinished cellars and unheated storage areas are not considered bedrooms nor do these areas add to your total room count. Where the total number of rooms for a **single family dwelling exceeds eight**, not including bathrooms, hallways, unfinished cellars and unheated storage areas, the number of bedrooms presumed shall be calculated by dividing the total number of rooms by two then rounding down to the next lowest whole number.

Examples:      8 Total Rooms / 2 = 4 (whole number) = **4 Bedroom Minimum Septic Required**  
                    9 Total Rooms / 2 = 4.5 (rounded down) = **4 Bedroom Minimum Septic Required**  
                    10 Total Rooms / 2 = 5 (whole number) = **5 Bedroom Minimum Septic Required**

\* In addition, a house with a septic approved for fewer than 4 bedrooms (1, 2, or 3 bedrooms) is allowed to have the number of bedrooms the septic has been approved for, plus one kitchen, one living room, and one dining room only. Additional rooms that do not fit the bedroom definition may be proposed, but only up to a maximum of 7 rooms. All other rooms proposed (that fit the bedroom definition) above these capacities may require a new septic be designed, installed and certified in full compliance with all local and state regulations.

**Adding living space:** Additional living space proposed (for a single or multi-family unit) to existing finished rooms (as long as they are not new rooms) does not add flows to the septic system and is usually approved unless the proposed new foundation/wall location encroach on the minimum offsets required to the outside septic components and/or property lines. Should the total new living space proposed be in excess of 50% of your existing finished living space,, a current (within the last two years) Title 5 septic system inspection (to ensure the functionality of your existing septic) must be performed by a licensed inspector and a copy provided to the BOH prior to initial signoff/approval of the permit application through the BOH.

**Adding rooms (not bedrooms):** Adding rooms that are not considered bedrooms (as per above definition) may be approved for single family dwellings so long as the total number of rooms do not exceed the maximum number allowed for your approved septic system (see “\*Examples” above). The adding of a single room which does technically fit the bedroom definition, although is not going to be used or allowed as a bedroom (such as a family room, play room, game room, etc.) may also be approved so long as the total number of rooms do not exceed the maximum number allowed for your approved septic system and so long as a deed restriction limiting/disclosing the approved number of bedrooms is recorded on the property at the Registry of Deeds in Lowell. A copy of which must be forwarded to the BOH prior to initial signoff/approval of the permit application.

**Adding bedrooms:** Septic system must have existing capacity to accommodate new bedroom without requiring variances from any local or State regulations pertaining to septic systems. Should there be inadequate existing capacity, the permit can not be approved unless either a new septic is designed, installed and certified (again) in full compliance with all local and State regulations pertaining to septic systems OR a bedroom is lost/removed from somewhere else in the dwelling so there is no net gain of bedrooms.