

Regional Program Standards

Focus: WorkSource Centers Youth Program Services
 Other: Economic Opportunity Program

Topic: Rent Assistance

Date: July 1, 2020

New Revised

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Overview

As a project of the Economic Opportunity Program (EOP), the Rent Assistance project follows all EOP Regional Program Standards except as noted below.

The Rent Assistance EOP is intended to provide specific types of housing resources over a period time for participants to stabilize their rental housing situation and allow them to actively engage in workforce development services. Rent Assistance is provided through the Rent Assistance Coordinator organization and is available to eligible career coaching customers.

For participants that require one-time assistance, Career Coaches should first investigate the option of assisting through EOP or WorkSource Portland Metro support services.

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Eligibility

EOP Enrollment

To be considered for Rent Assistance, participants must be enrolled in one of the career coaching projects.

Residency and Additional Eligibility Requirements

A Home for Everyone (AHFE) Funding

All Rent Assistance recipients must be engaged in an eligible career coaching project and must have identified as a Multnomah County resident when registering for and enrolling in the project. Further, recipients must be considered Homeless or at imminent risk of losing housing. Participants who receive Homelessness Prevention assistance must be living in a residence located within Multnomah County.

Rent assistance may be available for participants who find housing outside of Multnomah County; funder approval is required in this situation. To secure approval, the Rent Assistance Coordinator must email their Worksystems contract liaison and detail the circumstances. Worksystems will request funder approval and provide it back to the Rent Assistance Coordinator in writing for the file.

Office of Civic Life Social Equity and Educational Development (SEED) Funding

All Rent Assistance recipients must be engaged in an EOP project with an agency located within Multnomah County and must have identified as a City of Portland resident when registering for EOP. If a participant was homeless at registration and used their Career Coaching provider's address, they can attest in writing if their last residence was in the City of Portland. Further, recipients must be considered Homeless or at imminent risk of losing housing. Participants who receive Homelessness Prevention assistance must be living in a residence located within City of Portland. In addition, participants must have identified as having a criminal record (under Employment Characteristics in I-Trac Registration) when registering for EOP.

Rent assistance may be available for homeless participants who find housing outside of the City of Portland; Worksystems' approval is required in this situation. To secure approval, the Rent Assistance Coordinator must email their Worksystems contract liaison and detail the circumstances. Worksystems will provide written approval back to the Rent Assistance Coordinator in writing for the file.

Washington County Rent Assistance

All Rent Assistance recipients must be engaged with an eligible career coaching project and must have identified as a Washington County resident when registering for and enrolling in WIOA or the project. Further, recipients must be considered Homeless or at imminent risk of losing housing. Participants who receive Homelessness Prevention assistance must be living in a residence located within Washington County.

For Washington County CARES Act funding, participants must be a Washington County resident as indicated in their I-Trac registration and attest to experiencing a financial or income loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For Oregon Health Authority CARES funding, participants must attest to begin negatively impacted by COVID-19 and to having an income that is 80% or below median income. Rent assistance may be available for participants who are residents of other counties; funder approval is required in this situation. To secure approval, the Rent Assistance Coordinator must email their Worksystems contract liaison and detail the circumstances. Worksystems will secure funder approval and provide the approval back to the Rent Assistance Coordinator in writing for the file.

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Washington County CARES Act funding can only pay for housing costs that occurred through December 2020. Oregon Health Authority funding can only pay for housing costs that occurred through April 2021.

Homeless Definition

An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including any of the following situations:

- Living in a place not meant for human habitation (like a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport or campground).
- Living in a shelter, transitional housing or hotel or motel paid for with a voucher.
- Exiting an institution (like hospital or jail) where they resided for less than 90 days and resided in a place not meant for human habitation or an emergency shelter before entering the institution.
- Losing their primary nighttime residence within 14 days with no subsequent residence identified and lacking the resources and support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.
- Some youth or families who meet other federal definitions of homelessness.
- Fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or other dangerous conditions and has no other residence or resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.
- Imminently at risk of losing access to, or is unsafely sharing, the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; including, but not limited to person's presence is in violation of a lease/rental agreement, housing has been deemed uninhabitable by a government or social service agency, there exists an imminent threat of violence and/or illegal activity, the individual's or family's presence violates maximum housing occupancy limits.

Engaged Participant

To be referred to and receive Rent Assistance, participants must meet any two of these engagement criteria:

- Attending established appointments with the Career Coach.
- Maintain weekly contact with Career Coach.
- Engaged in Job Search – either one WorkSource activity per week or the Career Coach has knowledge of at least one employer contact per week.
- Meeting goals set in the Career Plan.
- Engaged in a training program that is specified in the Career Plan.

Employed participants in Retention and Advancement services who maintain monthly, documented, contact with the Career Coach are also considered engaged for this eligibility requirement.

Career Coaches must verify program engagement in the Rent Assistance Program Engagement control in the Payments tab in I-Trac when the participant is referred to rent assistance, while they are searching for rent assistance, and then each subsequent month that rent assistance is received until rent assistance ends (the monthly verification must occur prior to the payment being released).

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Housing Related Costs

Housing related costs are those that help a participant obtain housing or make their housing habitable. Certain funding sources, including at time of publication the Oregon Health Authority, AHFE and the SEED program, allow for housing related costs. Allowable costs include things like fees related to Rent Well classes, fees charged by an organization like Community Warehouse to access furniture, and costs to purchase furniture. Up to \$500 per participant may be paid in housing related costs. Additional sources may be added over time; check with your contract liaison to determine if a particular funding source allows for Housing Related Costs to be covered.

Housing related costs should be coordinated with the Career Coach(es) to ensure there is not duplication of payments. Rent Assistance Programs will follow the EOP Regional Program Standards/Support Services to review, approve and document housing related support service costs paid with Rent Assistance funding.

Allowable Rent Assistance Expenses

There are two types of Rent Assistance available: Rapid Re-housing assistance and Homelessness Prevention assistance.

Rapid Re-Housing	Homelessness Prevention
Application and move-in fees	1 to 6 months' rent assistance Household pays minimum 30% of income towards rent; exceptions and extensions may be made based on need.
Security deposit Up to 2-times the rent amount.	1 to 3 months' mobile home space rent Household pays minimum 30% of income toward rent, exceptions and extensions may be made based on need.
Rent debt to former landlord Allowable only if debt is the only barrier to landlord acceptance of a housing application, and there is a potential approved unit that a landlord is willing to rent.	
Utility Bills Allowable only if it is a barrier for housing and participant is unable to access community resources. (Includes utility arrears, deposit, debt.)	Late Fees

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Rapid Re-Housing	Homelessness Prevention
1 to 6 months' rent assistance Household pays minimum 30% of income towards rent; exceptions and extension may be made based on need. If a client moves in and the landlord applies pro-rated rent to the first month that is less than a full months' rent, it is counted as Month 0 and the client may still receive up to six months of rent assistance after Month 0.	Limited rent payment allowed toward Section 8 or public housing units.
Limited rent payment allowed toward Section 8 or public housing units.	Assistance for owner-occupied mortgage payments may be available with funder approval. To seek approval, the Rent Assistance Coordinator must email their Worksystems' contract liaison and detail the circumstances and the total dollar amount being requested. Worksystems will request funder approval.

Terminating Rent Assistance

If a participant fails to meet the engaged requirement, the Career Coach must contact the Rent Assistance Coordinator as soon as disengagement is determined and notify them using both methods below:

- The Career Coach marks "Not Engaged" in the Rent Assistance – Program Engagement control in the Payments tab in I-Trac.
- The Career Coach sends an email to the Rent Assistance Coordinator explaining why the participant is no longer considered engaged and outline the barriers that the participant has faced towards engagement.

The Career Coach and the Rent Assistance Coordinator are to discuss the participant's circumstances and what efforts have been made to re-engage them in services. The decision to terminate rent assistance and the related timeline is to be made by the two staff together.

When it has been determined that a participant's rent assistance will be terminated, the Rent Assistance Coordinator will send the participant a 30-day notice of rent assistance termination.

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Performance

The following performance will be tracked and reported (all measures are counts rather than percentages).

Success Measure	Detail/Methodology
Enrollment	A count of participants enrolled with household income at 30% MFI. A count of participants enrolled with household income at 50% MFI.
Individuals Housed with Rapid Re-Housing	Number of participants that receive Rapid Re-Housing Rent Assistance and become housed.
Individuals Housed with Homelessness Prevention	Number of participants that receive Homelessness Prevention Rent Assistance and become housed.
Housing Retention for 6 months	Of participants that complete Rapid Re-Housing/Homelessness Prevention assistance, those that retain housing 6 months after rent assistance ends.
Housing Retention for 12 months	Of participants that complete Rapid Re-Housing/Homelessness Prevention assistance, those that retain housing 12 months after rent assistance ends.

Performance Management Guidance

Individuals with Rapid Re-Housing/Homelessness Prevention

Rent Assistance Coordination staff is responsible for entering referral, payment, rent assistance and housing status change date information, and other required data in I-Trac and ServicePoint once a participant is referred to and begins receiving rent assistance. They will also keep a rent assistance log with detailed payment information such as name/Service Point ID of client, name of landlord, date of check, amount of rent paid, and month for which rent was paid.

Housing Retention for 6 Months

Rent Assistance Coordination staff is responsible for entering housing retention follow-up information in I-Trac and ServicePoint.

Housing Retention for 12 Months

Rent Assistance Coordination staff is responsible for entering housing retention follow-up information in I-Trac and ServicePoint.

Documentation Requirements

AHFE and SEED Funds

The following are file documentation requirements for participants receiving rent assistance funding under the above referenced projects. Documentation may be paper located in a physical file (to be always kept in a secure [locked] file location); may be kept in a secure electronic file (secure means limited access/access requiring system permissions and is not in a folder accessible by all staff and with no security built in); or may be in the form of staff attestation through data entry in the I-Trac, ServicePoint or Agency MIS, as appropriate.

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A Rent Assistance log is also required which includes detailed payment information: Service Point, JSID or I-Trac ID of client, name of Landlord, date of check, amount of rent paid, and month for which rent was paid.

Data entry and Rent Assistance participant file maintenance is the responsibility of the Rent Assistance Coordinator agency.

Requirement	Detail	Location
Rent Assistance Referral form	<p>Completed by participant and Career Coach; must be signed by the participant.</p> <p>Exception: If a participant is not available to sign at the point of referral, one of the following must be on file <i>and</i> the participant must sign the Referral form at the Intake Meeting with the Rent Assistance Coordinator (signature becomes the responsibility of Rent Assistance Coordination Agency):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An email from the participant that states they completed the referral with the Career Coach via phone, they approve its submission to, and information shared with the Rent Assistance Coordination Agency, and they understand they must sign the Referral form at their Intake meeting. • A voice mail message on file that states the points outlined in email option above. • Staff attestation via email or case note 	<p>File</p> <p>Exceptions File (email) Electronic file (voice mail)</p>
Intake Form	Includes all required demographic and characteristic information, eligibility detail for rent assistance, and a participant attestation statement that all information contained on the form is true accurate to the best of the participant's knowledge. The Intake Form is to be signed by both the participant and the Rent Assistance Coordinator.	File
Homeless Status	Verify that participant is either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless as defined by the funding source.	Staff Attestation I-Trac Rent Assistance Management control
Release of Information	Secure signatures of all adults in the household on the Release of Information printed out of ServicePoint; the Rent Assistance Coordination Agency release, if required by Agency.	ServicePoint File
Housing Placement Assessment / Housing Stability Plan	A housing readiness assessment and housing stability plan is required for participants that receive housing placement assistance.	File

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Requirement	Detail	Location
Statement of Understanding	The statement of understanding is to be signed by the participant to acknowledge the number of months the Rent Assistance Coordinator communicated that rent assistance will be provided given that the participant remains eligible. Any amendments to the plan are to be added to the file; email communication of amendments is acceptable file documentation.	File
Case Notes	Notes relative to participant's progress in their plan. Case notes are either a service or a narrative case note tracked in I-Trac or a service in I-Trac and narrative case note in an agency's case noting system. Narrative case notes should not include any medical or treatment information, or personal information that is not relevant to their career plan activities.	Staff Attestation I-Trac / Agency Narrative Case Note System
Rent Assistance	The Rent Assistance Coordinator will enter all required data in the Rent Assistance controls in I-Trac and any required data entry to ServicePoint.	Staff Attestation I-Trac Payments Tab
Rent Assistance Follow-Up	Evidence of follow-up contact at 6- and 12-months following the date that rent assistance ended; entered by Rent Assistance Coordinator in appropriate system(s).	I-Trac ServicePoint
30-day End of Assistance Letter	Copy of letter sent to landlord and participant, along with any amendments.	File
Rental Agreement	Documentation is required to show that the participant is living in the unit legally and with knowledge of the landlord/property owner.	File

Washington County Fund

The following are file documentation requirements for participants receiving Washington County rent assistance funding.

Documentation may be paper located in a physical file (to be always kept in a secure [locked] file location); may be kept in a secure electronic file (secure means limited access/access requiring system permissions and is not in a folder accessible by all staff and with no security built in); or may be in the form of staff attestation through data entry in the I-Trac, ServicePoint or Agency MIS, as appropriate.

A Rent Assistance log is also required which includes detailed payment information: Service Point, JSID or I-Trac ID of client, name of Landlord, date of check, amount of rent paid, and month for which rent was paid.

Data entry and Rent Assistance participant file maintenance is the responsibility of the Rent Assistance Coordinator agency.

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Requirement	Detail	Location
Rent Assistance Referral form	<p>Completed by participant and Career Coach; must be signed by the participant.</p> <p>Exception: If a participant is not available to sign at the point of referral, one of the following must be on file <u>and</u> the participant must sign the Referral form at the Intake Meeting with the Rent Assistance Coordinator (signature becomes the responsibility of Rent Assistance Coordination Agency):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An email from the participant that states they completed the referral with the Career Coach via phone, they approve its submission to, and information shared with the Rent Assistance Coordination Agency, and they understand they must sign the Referral form at their Intake meeting. • A voice mail message on file that states the points outlined in email option above. • Staff attestation via email or case note 	<p>File</p> <p>Exceptions File (email) Electronic file (voice mail)</p>
Intake Form	Includes all required assessment, demographic and characteristic information, eligibility detail for rent assistance, and a participant attestation statement that all information contained on the form is true accurate to the bet of the participant's knowledge.	Service Point
Homeless Status	Verify that participant is either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless as defined by the funding source.	Staff Attestation Service Point I-Trac Rent Assistance Management control
Release of Information	Secure signatures of all adults in the household on the Release of Information printed out of ServicePoint (Road Home release); the Rent Assistance Coordination Agency release, if required by Agency.	ServicePoint File
Housing Placement Assessment / Housing Stability Plan	A housing readiness assessment (Community Connect Assessment) and housing stability plan is required for participants that receive housing placement assistance.	File
Rent Plan	The rent plan is to be sent to the participant to acknowledge the number of months the Rent Assistance Coordinator communicated that rent assistance will be provided given that the participant remains eligible. Any amendments to the plan are to be added to the file; email communication of amendments is acceptable file documentation.	File

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Requirement	Detail	Location
Case Notes	<p>Notes relative to participant's progress in their plan. Case notes are either a service or a narrative case note tracked in I-Trac or a service in I-Trac and narrative case note in an agency's case noting system.</p> <p>Narrative case notes should not include any medical or treatment information, or personal information that is not relevant to their career plan activities.</p>	Staff Attestation I-Trac / Agency Narrative Case Note System Service Point
Rent Assistance	The Rent Assistance Coordinator will enter all required data in the Rent Assistance controls in I-Trac and any required data entry to ServicePoint.	Staff Attestation I-Trac Payments Tab Service Point
Rent Assistance Follow-Up	Evidence of follow-up contact at 6- and 12-months following the date that rent assistance ended; entered by Rent Assistance Coordinator in appropriate system(s).	I-Trac ServicePoint
Rental Agreement	Documentation is required to show that the participant is living in the unit legally and with knowledge of the landlord/property owner.	File