



WORKSOURCE PORTLAND METRO

Regional Program Standards

Focus: WorkSource Centers Youth Program Services
 Other: Economic Opportunity Program and Workforce Navigator Program

Topic: COVID-19 Rent Assistance

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New

Revised

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Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a widespread impact on households in the Portland Metro Local Workforce Area beginning in March 2020 when local businesses began temporary closures and both temporary and permanent workforce layoffs.

For renters, a moratorium on eviction and deferral of residential rents was put in place by the Governor and extended by the legislature. The moratorium allows for deferral of rent owed during the period April 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021. Renters have until February 28, 2022, to pay the deferred rents. The moratorium and deferral apply to all residential rental properties in Multnomah County. Tenants must provide documentation of income and COVID-19 financial and housing impact. **Note:** These dates may change if State or Federal legislative action is taken. Changes in moratorium and deferral dates will be communicated via email to contractors.

The COVID-19 Rent Assistance program is designed to prevent households from experiencing evictions and homelessness due to the financial and health impacts of COVID-19.

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Eligibility

To be considered for assistance through the Emergency Rent Relief Program (ERAP) participants must:

- Be enrolled in one of the participating Contractor programs.
- Live in a rental unit located within Multnomah County or be an unhoused Multnomah County resident.
- Have a household income of not more than 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI).
- Have experienced a financial or income loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- At risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Documentation

Documentation of income and COVID housing impact is required. This requirement can be waived for extenuating circumstances.

The ERAP Intake Form outlines the extenuating circumstances which may be considered, and details the Area Median Family Income levels for different household sizes. Allowable documents are listed below which can support income and COVID housing impact.

Providers must maintain all collected documentation in a securely locked file cabinet (or secure server for electronic files) available for monitors to review if necessary. Eligibility documentation is not to be sent to back up payment requests, but staff will be required to attest that it has been collected and is on file.

Income

To document income, all household members over the age of 18 must provide one of the following:

- 2020 tax return forms (e.g., a 1099, 1040/1040A or Schedule C of 1040).
- 2020 W-2 form.
- Most recent paycheck stubs.
- A letter of termination from your job.
- Employer-generated salary report or letter stating current annual income or earnings statement.
- Current bank statement showing direct deposit of income and/or benefits.
- Proof of application for unemployment benefits.
- Proof that unemployment benefits have expired.
- Self Employed – tax records, statements, or other documentation of loss of employment.
- Benefits eligibility letter from a government program, including award letter (TANF, SSI, other benefits).

Customer attestation is acceptable in the following circumstances:

- Household lives in census tract with average 2020 median income at or below eligibility threshold, as determined by using <https://geomap.ffiec.gov/FFIECGeocMap/GeocodeMap1.aspx> to check the residence address.
- Necessary as reasonable accommodation for a person with disabilities.
- Necessary due to extenuating circumstances related to pandemic or lack of technological access.

COVID Housing Impact

To document that the household has experienced an increased risk of homelessness or housing instability since April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the participant must provide one of the following:

- Nonpayment of Rent Notice.
- Document showing that utilities paid to the landlord are overdue.
- Note or email from landlord about unpaid money.
- Court documents (eviction related or restraining order).
- Note from roommate showing that they are doubled or tripled up.
- Documentation of unsafe or unhealthy living conditions such as pictures or communication with the landlord about needed repairs.
- Letter from case worker, domestic violence advocate, lawyer, or medical professional about substandard housing.
- Letter from worker, domestic violence advocate, lawyer, or medical professional about risk of homelessness or housing instability.

If the household is unable to provide any of the above documentation, the participant must attest (on the Intake form) to the reason why the household has experienced an increased risk of homelessness or housing instability since April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rental Agreement

A current lease or rental agreement is required. It must be signed by the participant and landlord or sub-lessor, identify the unit where the participant resides and show the rental payment amount. If a signed lease is not available, proof of rent due may include one of the following:

- ERAP Agreement to Assign Rent Assistance (AARA) Form.
 - If the landlord refuses to sign, providers may complete the “attestation of notification” section on the AARA form.
- Another source of written confirmation by a landlord who can be verified as the actual owner or management agent of the rental unit.
- Landlord Verification of Rent Due.

Priority

ERAP assistance will be prioritized for:

- Households facing imminent eviction due to nonpayment of rent and the upcoming COVID Eviction Moratorium payment deadline of February 28, 2022, for past due rents.
- Households with household incomes at or below 50% of AMI.
- Households with at least one household member who has been unemployed for at least 90 days preceding the date of application.
- Households whose members are Black, Indigenous, or other People of Color (BIPOC).

Roommate Situations

Where the participant is one of multiple members of a household (family, extended family or non-related roommates), the entire rent may be paid based on the participant's qualifications for assistance. The participant is considered the Head of Household for purposes of ERAP Intake data collection.

Public Housing Residents

Households currently receiving federally subsidized assistance are eligible to receive ERAP funds to pay the tenant-portion of their rent only. Households residing in a Portland Housing Bureau financed affordable housing unit should consult with their property manager about whether the landlord intends to pursue these funds on their behalf.

Disclosures

All participants must sign a completed *Client Consent to Release of Information for Data Sharing* (parent signature required for participants under age 18). All participants must be given the *ERAP City-County Privacy Notice*.

All participants must receive written proof that a completed rent assistance application has been submitted. Written proof can be an email, text or letter. Verbal confirmation alone is not sufficient. Contractors are to place the *Sample Letter Confirming Application to Rent Assistance* on their agency letterhead or customize it with their agency name, address and logo.

Signatures

Where the participant is working with Contractor staff virtually, follow these guidelines for securing signature via email.

Send electronic signature email (see required content below) to the participant's email address and ask that they reply that they agree. The returned email agreement is to be saved and retained electronically. **Please Note:** The participant's completed ERAP Intake form is not to be sent, as it contains PII. Staff should review the ERAP Intake form with the participant virtually, including the attestation statement above the signature lines.

Staff Email Content

The staff email to the participant must include the following verbiage:

[Name of Participant] – Please complete the Release of Information form as we discussed and reply to this email after reviewing the information below with "I Agree" if you do agree and wish to receive the Rent Assistance services we discussed. Please attach the completed Release of Information form. Thank you.

This email from my personal email account is my certification that the information I provided to staff for Intake for Rent Assistance services is true to the best of my knowledge as of the Intake date. I further certify that staff reviewed the completed Intake form with me via a telephone or virtual meeting.

I agree to provide documentation to confirm the information being used to determine my eligibility, as requested by staff. I understand that providing false or inaccurate information could lead to removal from the program and deem me liable for all costs expended on my behalf.

I have reviewed the Release of Information form and indicated the level of information sharing I agree to by initialing the appropriate box on the form. I am returning the form with this email.

Youth Under Age 18

When a participant is under age 18, staff are to forward the email sent to the applicant to their parent or guardian's email account to secure approval of Rent Assistance services. The parent or guardian email is to include this verbiage:

[Name of Parent or Guardian] – [Name of Applicant] has applied for Rent Assistance services with [Name of Contractor Agency]. To provide these services, your approval of the Release of Information agreement is required. Please review the email below and the attachments included that [Name of Applicant] is being asked review and reply their approval to. If you agree with the Release of Information selection, please reply to this email with "I Agree." If you do not approve of the Release of Information selection, please reply "I Do Not Agree" and the Release of Information selection will be changed. Thank you ... if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Note: Staff should include contact information for the parent to use if they have questions.

Allowable Rent Assistance Expenses

The project allows for the following types of assistance with the required documentation. Contractors should follow their own fiscal processes relative to collection of W-9 and 1099 reporting.

- Current rent payments
- Move-In Costs
- Future rent payments
- Rent arrears

All rent assistance must be paid before June 30, 2022. The last allowable month is rent for July 2022.

However, contractors are strongly encouraged to expend funds before February 28, 2022, which is the COVID-19 Eviction Moratorium payment deadline for past rent due. The option to pay rent for up to 3 months in the future with July 2022 the last month of rent which can be paid is allowed to help contractors expend funds before February 28, 2022.

Generally, ERAP rent assistance is limited to a maximum of 9 months of payments per participant. Participants in households at or below 50% AMI, or households with at least one member who has been unemployed at least 90 days, are eligible to receive a maximum of 12 months of ERAP assistance payments per participant.

Rent payments must be made directly to the landlord.

Required Documentation: Participant attestation (included in the Intake form) of their status as a renter, the address of the rental unit where they reside and the rent amount the assistance is supporting. Payment must be made to the leaseholder/owner.

Documents to be collected with the rent payment request:

- Completed *ERAP Intake* form, which includes percent of MFI checkbox, documentation of need, rental status and unit/landlord details. The participant is the Head of Household on this form.
- Completed and properly signed *ERAP City-County Release of Information*.
- Completed *Agreement to Assign Rental Assistance*.
- Completed and signed *ERAP Staff Documentation-Signature Attestation*.
- Copy of rent payment check from Contractor fiscal system or copy of GL which reflects detail for the rent payment (date, payable to, amount, participant name).

Documents to be collected if same participant returns to the program and has not yet exceed 9 or 12 months of rent assistance as determined by eligibility:

- New *ERAP Intake* form. (Information from the first intake can be copied if it remains accurate.)
- Updated ROI if composition of household has changed.
- New *Agreement to Assign Rental Assistance*. (Information from the first AARA can be copied if it remains accurate.)
- Completed and signed *ERAP Staff Documentation-Signature Attestation*.
- Copy of rent payment check from Contractor fiscal system or copy of GL which reflects detail for the rent payment (date, payable to, amount, participant name).

Current Rent Payments and Move-In Costs

Definition: Rent is current when being paid for the month it is due and within 10 days of the first day of the month.

Current rent payments are limited to the month of intake, or the following month, through June 2022. Current payments are included in the maximum of 9 or 12 months allowed per participant (as determined by household AMI and unemployment status). One check may be sent for all types of rent payments approved and paid – arrears, current and future month(s) payments.

Contractors may receive approval from Worksystems staff for exceptions to these requirements, including months paid and when they are paid. Exceptions will be provided in writing and must be maintained in fiscal file.

Security deposits and application fees may be paid when required for a residence change.

Future Rent Payments

Definition: Rent is considered a future month when it follows the month qualifying as the current month. No month may be current and future at the same time.

Contractors may pay up to 3 months of future rent payments. Future payments are included in the maximum of 9 or 12 months allowed per participant (as determined by household AMI and unemployment status). One check may be sent for all types of rent payments approved and paid – arrears, current and future month(s) payments.

Rent Arrears

Definition: Rent is considered in arrears if it is being paid 10 days or later following the first of the month due date.

Funding may be used for participant rent payments that were due April 2020 or later and were not paid by participant under the moratorium. Accrued late fees are allowable as part of the rent arrears calculation. One check may be sent for all types of rent payments approved and paid – arrears, current and future month(s) payments.

Unallowable Expense

Utilities, mortgage payments and direct client assistance (i.e., payments made to participants) are not eligible expenses.

Some rental agreements may list, and include as part of the total rent, associated expenses such as utilities, pet rent, parking or garage. In such cases, the Contractor may pay the full amount of the rent payment that includes the utility(ies) as long as payment is made to the leaseholder/owner.

Reporting and Invoicing

An ERAP Rent Assistance Reporting workbook will be provided to each Contractor. All transactions are to be reported via the workbook with each invoice submission and updated cumulatively. An invoice worksheet is included in the workbook which is to be copied and used for each payment request – the final workbook should have the total cumulative of all payments and a worksheet for each invoice submitted.

Expenditure reporting (Reporting tab of workbook) and backup documentation (customers forms) are due on the 5th of the month for the subsequent month's rent. Invoices and proof of payment are due on the 15th of the month for reimbursement of the subsequent month's rent payments. All documentation for each transaction (payment) is to be submitted with the corresponding invoice as follows:

- Expenditure reporting (Reporting tab of workbook) is to be emailed to Jennifer Fox (jfox@worksystems.org).
- Updated reporting workbook with the invoice worksheet for the period is to be emailed to fiscal@worksystems.org. Copy Jennifer Fox (jfox@worksystems.org) on the email.

- The backup documentation (customer forms) for each payment is to be organized by customer and submitted through the I-Trac Secure File Exchange system to ensure PII is not sent in via unsecure email.

Worksystems will review invoices and payment backup documentation and approve invoices for payments as submitted. Incomplete documentation will not be accepted, and contractor staff will be notified of issues to be resolved; the total invoice will be held to avoid disallowed costs until all documentation is received.

I-Trac Data Entry

The rent assistance payments will be tracked in the customer's I-Trac record in the Payments tab, Support Services Payments control:

Payment Type	Fiscal Reference
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• COVID RA – Rent• COVID RA – Rent Arrears Future rent payments are to be tracked as COVID RA – Rent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ERAP ERAP must be noted in the Fiscal Reference to distinguish this project.

Required Forms

ERAP Agreement to Assign Rental Assistance (*upload via I-Trac*)

ERAP City-County Privacy Notice (*provide to customer*)

ERAP City-County Release of Information (*upload via I-Trac*)

ERAP Intake Form (*upload via I-Trac*)

ERAP Letter Confirming Application to Rent Assistance (*provide to customer*)

ERAP Staff Documentation-Signature Attestation (*upload via I-Trac*)

Best Practices

- Consider providing the participant a copy of the Agreement to Assign Rental Assistance that is sent to the Landlord for signature. This way the participant knows which months have been agreed-to for payment.
- Consider discussing these elements with the participant before beginning the paperwork for ERAP:
 - Does the landlord know they live in the unit? If not, is it OK for the landlord to know that they're living in the unit?
 - Regarding the Intake Form – are you and any others living in the household willing to allow information on the form to be put into the housing database and used for reporting?
- Consider inviting Jennifer Fox to individually meet with staff and conduct a personalized review of their initial set of forms. This review may help decrease the number of documentation errors that must be corrected before payments can be approved. For assistance on how to complete each form, refer to its annotated "How To" version that documents what to do to properly complete the form. These are collected in a PDF titled "COVID Rent Assistance Form Guide: Round 3."