



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR UTILITY PAYMENTS

(February 24, 2021-Greenville, Texas) The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) recently announced a \$1.3 billion rental assistance program for Texans struggling to make rent and utility payments. The program is available for renters only and applicants may seek assistance for past-due rent, utilities, or both.

In announcing this new program, funded by the federal CARES Act, Gov. Abbott said that “the COVID-19 pandemic has placed a significant financial strain on many Texans, and the Texas Rent Relief Program will provide an incredible lifeline to households in need of assistance on their rent and utility payments.”

What can applicants receive? Applicants are eligible to receive funding up to 11 months of past-due rent and utility bills, the current month’s rent and utility bills, and up to three months of expected rent and utility bills, for a total of 15 months of assistance. Moreover, after three months of forward assistance, an applicant can request an addition three months of assistance if funds are still available.

Renters may also seek assistance for their utility bills despite the status of their rent payments. Utility services include electricity, gas, water, trash, and energy costs (such as fuel oil), but not telecommunication services (such as phone, cable, and internet).

Who can apply? Renters are able to apply if:

- the household has an income no more than 80% of area median income, and
- one or more members of the household submit a written attestation that they qualified for unemployment benefits or experienced a reduction in income, incurred significant costs, or experienced other financial hardship due to the pandemic, and
- one or more members of the household demonstrate that they are at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability (which may be shown by a past-due utility or rent notice or an eviction notice) or that they live in unsafe or unhealthy housing conditions.

Moreover, applicants whose income is at or below 50% of area median income or where one or more members are currently unemployed and have been unemployed for 90 days prior will be given priority if the application is made within the first two weeks of applications opening. Once the priority applicants are processed, applications will be reviewed on a first-come, first-serve basis.

TDHCA has created a county-by-county list of income limits as well as a simple flowchart for eligibility.

Again, this program is reserved only for those who rent their homes – mortgage payments and utility expenses for homeowners are not eligible.

Applications can be completed online at TexasRentRelief.com or via phone at (833) 9TX-RENT (toll free). The toll-free number offers access to assistance in multiple languages. Applications began being accepted **on February 15**.

More information can be found at TexasRentRelief.com.

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