Central Application FAQs

PUBLIC DOCUMENT
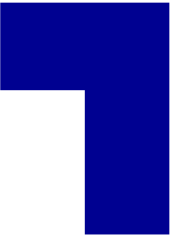
Contents

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Central App Overview

1. **What is the central app? Do I need to know which specific program I am eligible for before applying?**
   The Central Application is a single online location where Massachusetts residents can apply for emergency housing assistance payments, including RAFT, ERMA, and ERAP, regardless of where they live in Massachusetts. The Central Application provides a single-entry point for Tenants, Landlords, Homeowners, and Advocates to apply for housing assistance. Regional Administering Agencies (RAAs) or the Rental Assistance Processing (RAP) Center will determine what program(s) the applicant is eligible for based on their submitted information and eligibility criteria.

2. **How can I submit an application if I don't have a computer?**
   You can submit an application and documents using your smartphone. If you do not have access to a smartphone, computer or internet, you can also use a computer at your local library (find yours here) or your local Regional Administering Agency (RAA) (find yours here). Some community-based organizations can also sit with you and help you complete an application. If needed, an RAA can also provide you with a paper application.

3. **What languages are the application available in?**
   The application is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Haitian Creole, Russian, and Khmer/Cambodian. Applicants select the preferred language tile on the Central App Portal before beginning the application. All other languages are available by selecting the language through the Google Translate tool at the top of the application page.

4. **Can advocates submit applications?**
   Yes, advocates – including community-based organizations, family, and healthcare organizations – can submit on others' behalf. They will indicate that they are submitting on behalf of another person in the form when they are completing the application. Advocates will have a choice whether or not to continue communication on behalf of the applicant throughout the application process.

5. **Can an applicant save their application and come back to it at another time?**
   No, there is not a "save and resume" function with the Central App. Applicants can continue working on the application prior to submission while the browser is open, and the internet connection is stable. Applicants will also have the ability to upload additional documents after initial submission.

6. **What is the application ID?**

   Once an applicant submits an application, they will be sent an application ID that can be used to track and monitor their specific application, and to allow for the uploading of additional supporting documents needed to process the application.

7. **Do landlords have their own application ID?**

   If the landlord applies directly on behalf of their tenant, they will receive the application ID directly via email after applying. Otherwise, the landlord will use the same application ID for the application as the tenant. The tenant will receive an email containing the application ID regardless of who submits the application initially. If the tenant provides the landlord's email the landlord will also receive an email containing the application ID.

8. **How can an applicant retrieve their application ID?**

   Applicants can reference the original email that they received upon application submission. Additionally, applicants can contact the RAA by phone or email by accessing the information from the "Need Help" tile on the Central App portal.

9. **What documents are required to be submitted with the application?**

   The documents required to be submitted with the application may vary depending on the applicant's response to questions. The application will indicate with a red asterisk what documents will be required before submission is allowed. The full list of documents that may be required for the application to be processed can be found here. Please note, an applicant can submit the application initially for consideration without all documents included, however, complete applications will be processed faster. Applicants can submit additional documentation through the application portal by using their unique application ID.

10. **What happens if the applicant forgets to upload a document with their submission?**

    If an applicant file shows missing documentation, the RAA will contact the applicant with their application ID and a link to the portal where they can upload additional or new required documentation with their application. The applicant will select the "Upload Documents" tile. They will be asked to enter the application ID and their zip code to proceed with uploading the additional documentation.

11. **How can an applicant get in contact with the Regional Administering Agency (RAA) after submission?**

    If an applicant would like to get in contact with the RAA after they apply, they can select the "Application Information" tile in the Central App portal. Applicants will be asked to enter the application ID and their zip code, once entered, the name and contact information of the RAA that is processing the application will appear. Applicants can contact the RAA to ask for application support, clarification, status, or any general questions they may have.

12. What can an applicant do if they need help applying for housing assistance?
If an applicant needs help completing the application, they can contact their local Regional Administering Agency (RAA) for free assistance.

13. Are there any policy changes to the RAFT/ERMA/ERAP programs with the Central App?
No, there are no policy changes to the RAFT/ERMA/ERAP programs with the launch of the Central App. Any future policy changes will be communicated and incorporated into application questions if necessary.

14. How does the central application differ from the current RAA application(s) and process?
There is now one centralized application form maintained by DHCD instead of separate applications at each RAA. With significant input from RAAs, advocates, and low-income households, the new application asks generally the same questions but in a simpler manner for clients as well as RAA staff to process and review. Each RAA will no longer take applications through their own Cognito forms but will have applications routed to them from the central app.

15. Are my documents and personal information safe when I use the Central Application and Portal?
Yes, both the Central Application form and the Portal are secure and meet/exceed state IT security standards. You can feel confident uploading documents because:
   a. Your web browser will show a "lock" sign in the web address, which means the website is secure.
   b. The application is located at Mass.gov, the official website of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.