



# Central Application

Community Based Organization Training

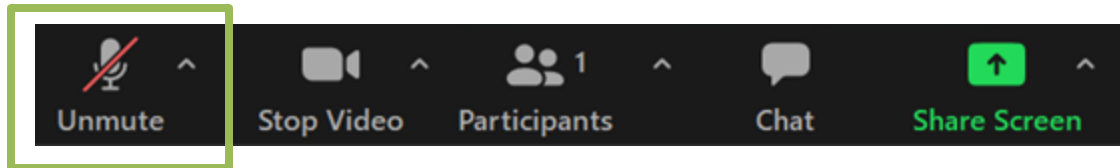
Friday, October 22, 2021

# ENGAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES



## Please Mute

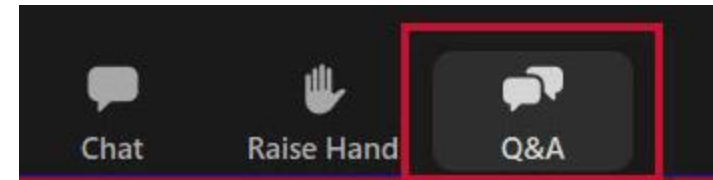
Please join the meeting muted during the session to keep interruptions to a minimum



## Asking Questions

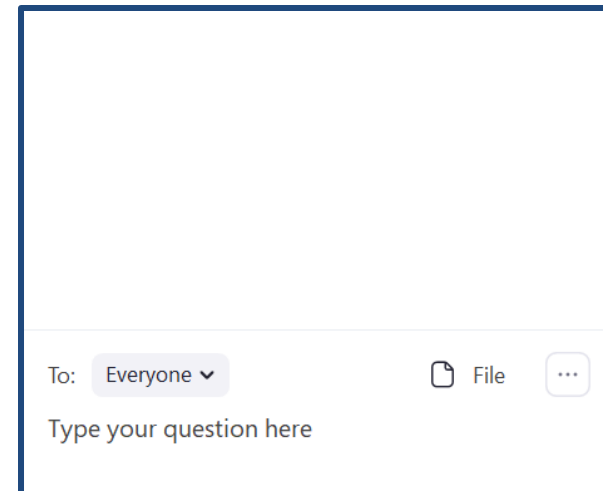
**We will be monitoring the Q&A for questions**

1



Click “Q&A” to open the chat window

2



Enter your question into the chat

*We will follow up with answers to any questions that we don't get to during the session.*



# WELCOME



# Our Journey Today

75 MINUTES



Welcome

5 mins



Central App Overview



Demo

50 mins



Portal Navigation



Questions & Answers

20 mins



Review details of the  
**Central Application** &  
High-Level Process  
Changes



Learn how the **Central  
Application Portal** can  
be used



Provide **a forum to ask  
questions** so you are  
prepared to use the  
Central App

# ERAP Good News Highlights (1 of 2)



**43,914**

Total # of Unique Households Served

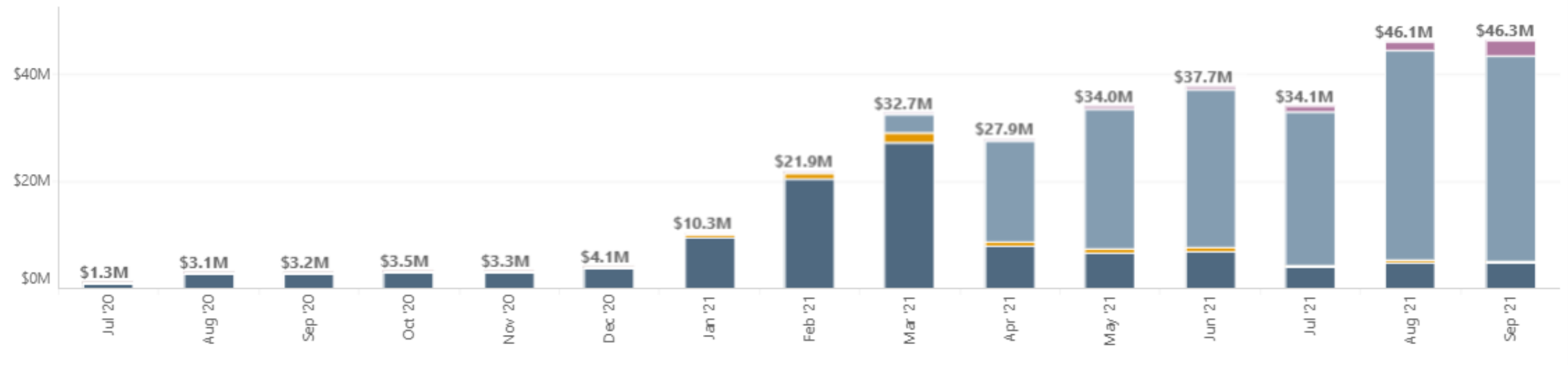
**\$309.5M**

Total Amount of Funds Distributed

**FUNDS DISTRIBUTED**

Funds Distributed by Month

■ RAFT ■ ERMA ■ ERAP ■ SHERA



- 1) The "Households Served by Month" view displays the number of unique households served within each month. There may be duplicate households across months if they receive multiple payments.
- 2) Funds Distributed is calculated only with direct assistance to households and does not include administration fees.
- 3) 8,626 households were assisted with \$40.3M of ERAP (formerly paid by RAFT) prior to official ERAP launch date.

# ERAP Good News Highlights (2 of 2)



**43,914**

Total # of Unique Households Served

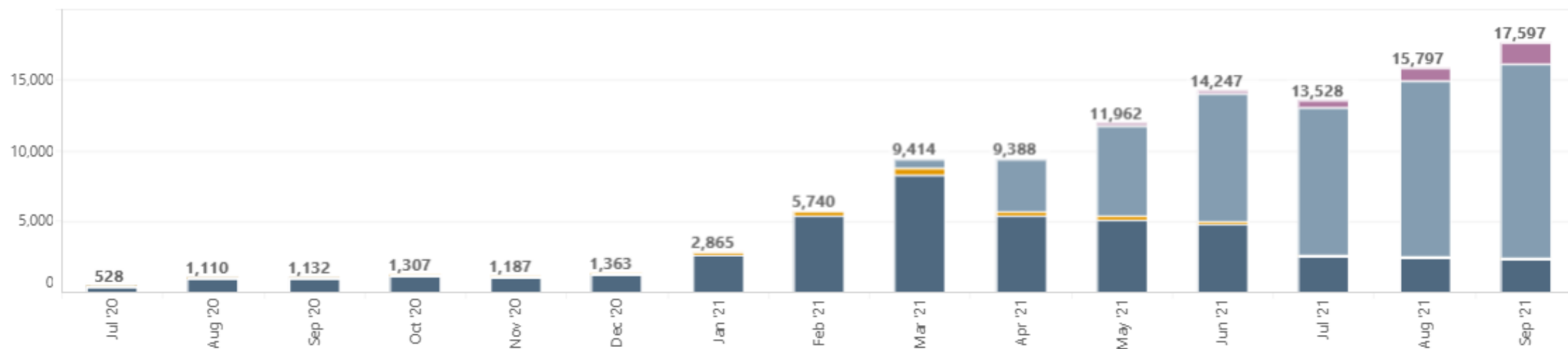
**\$309.5M**

Total Amount of Funds Distributed

**HOUSEHOLDS SERVED**

Households Served by Month

■ RAFT ■ ERMA ■ ERAP ■ SHERA



1) The "Households Served by Month" view displays the number of unique households served within each month. There may be duplicate households across months if they receive multiple payments.

2) Funds Distributed is calculated only with direct assistance to households and does not include administration fees.

3) 8,626 households were assisted with \$40.3M of ERAP (formerly paid by RAFT) prior to official ERAP launch date.



# CENTRAL APP OVERVIEW

# WHAT IS THE CENTRAL APPLICATION?



## WELCOME TO THE MASSACHUSETTS EMERGENCY HOUSING PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PORTAL

Use this portal to upload additional documents and see which RAA is processing your application.



- 1 Language
- 2 **Instructions**
- 3 Living Situation
- 4 COVID-19 Certification
- 5 Housing Crisis
- 6 Applicant Information
- 7 Household Income
- 8 Request for Assistance
- 9 Your Required Documents
- 10 Application Certification and Contract

### Instructions for Completing the Application

This application for rental assistance will take 20-30 minutes. Please complete it in one sitting; you will not be able to save and return to it.

Be honest – if you give inaccurate or incomplete information, your application may be delayed or denied.

The application will ask you:

- About your current housing, and what challenges you may be facing
- For the names, dates of birth, and social security numbers of everyone in your household. You don't have to include a social security number if you don't have one.
- How much money everyone in your household makes.
- What kind of assistance you need

You will also have to submit the following documentation. Your application will be processed faster if you include all of these documents.

- ID for the head of household
- Proof of housing crisis (for example an eviction notice or letter saying you're behind on rent)
- Proof of housing (for example a lease)
- Proof of income (for example paystubs)

[Click here to learn more about required documentation.](#)

After you submit the application, a case manager from a Regional Administering Agency (RAA) will contact you. Please respond quickly when they do.

Back

Next

The Central App is a single online location where Massachusetts residents can apply for rental or mortgage assistance benefits regardless of where they live in the state.

It is a single-entry point for Landlords, Tenants, Homeowners, and Advocates to apply for ERAP, ERMA and RAFT.

## *Central App Benefits*



Now **one**, single statewide application



**Single set of questions** paired with **Accessibility updates** across Commonwealth; easier to change



Additional documents can be **easily uploaded** through a single and secure statewide portal



DHCD has **direct insight** into applications received (& demographics), and can easily confirm **which RAA is processing** a given application



More **stable and secure** application structure with data redundancies

# APPLICATION UPDATES



The are 10-12 sections which should take around 20-30 minutes to complete.

While there is no save and resume functionality, the application will not time out as long as the browser remains open, and the internet connection is stable.

The application will require some documents to be uploaded prior to submission (indicated with a red asterisk). Additional documentation may be uploaded in the portal after submission if not already submitted with application.

- ① Language
- ② Instructions
- ③ Living Situation
- ④ COVID-19 Certification
- ⑤ Housing Crisis
- ⑥ Applicant Information
- ⑦ Household Income
- ⑧ Request for Assistance
- ⑨ Your Required Documents
- ⑩ Application Certification and Contract

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- How much money everyone in your household makes.
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- Proof of housing (for example a lease)
- Proof of income (for example paystubs)

[Click here to learn more about required documentation.](#)

After you submit the application, a case manager from a Regional Administering Agency (RAA) will contact you. Please respond quickly when they do.

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# SAVE AND RESUME FUNCTIONALITY



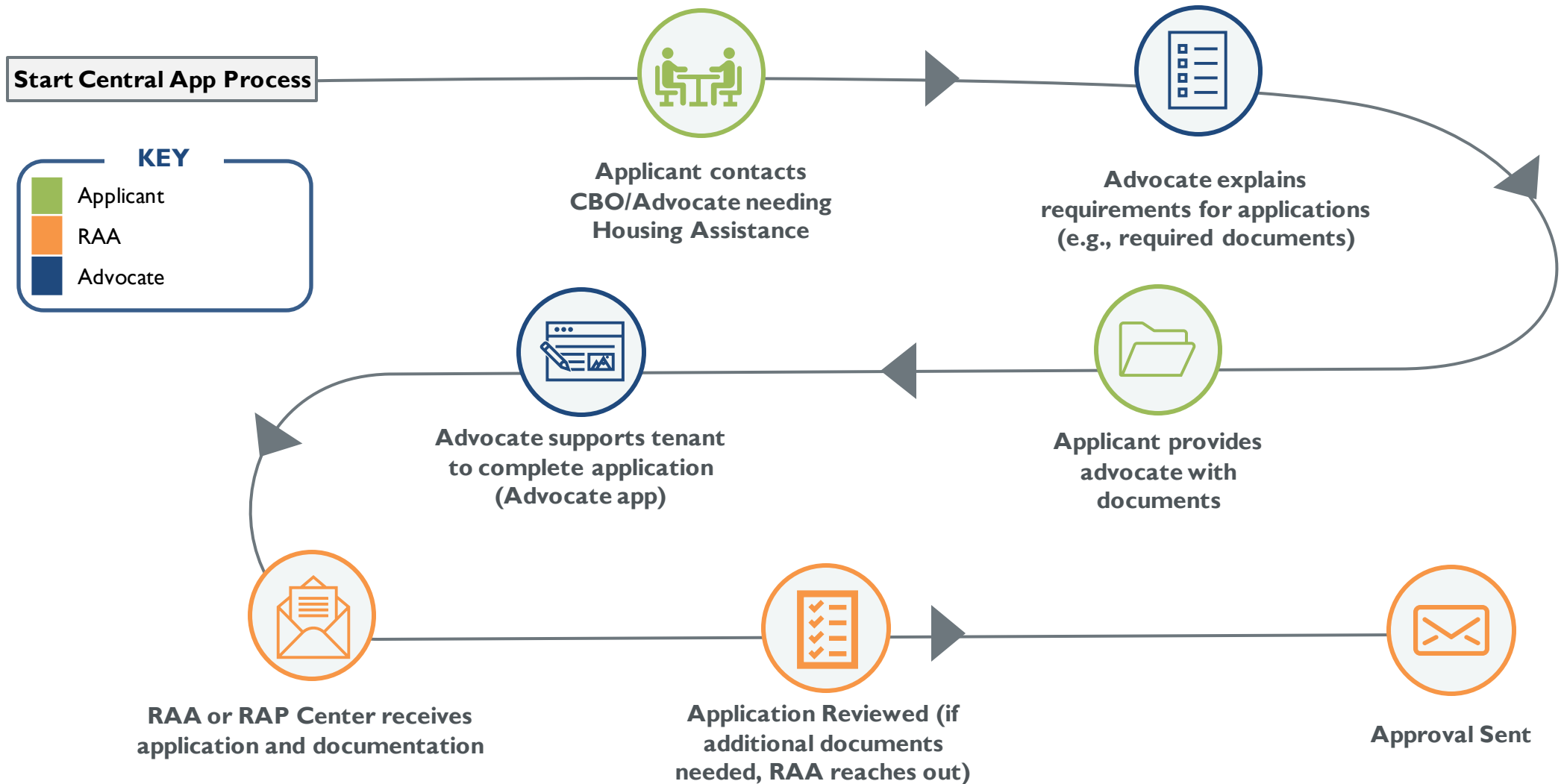
Under the current Central App, applicants **CAN:**

- ✓ Submit an application with *only* the **ID** (renters)
- ✓ Take **hours** to complete application (as long as internet connected/browser open)
- ✓ **Submit additional documents**, like a lease, via the Portal after submitting the application
- ✓ Email/call the **RAA** to make changes to the application (i.e., add a household member)

After submitting, applicants **CANNOT:**

- **Directly edit** the original application (instead, must contact RAA for changes)
- **Share** a copy of the application with an advocate for pre-review

# CENTRAL APPLICATION JOURNEY



Note: This is not an exhaustive list of activities

# COMPLETING ADVOCATE QUESTIONS



Complete the following advocate fields:

Advocate First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Advocate Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Advocate Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Advocate Email \_\_\_\_\_

Advocate Org: \_\_\_\_\_

Advocate Consent Confirmation

- ☐ Check the box “Please check this box to confirm you have consent to submit this application on behalf of the applicant”
- ☐ If you click this box: “Please check this box to confirm you have consent to **communicate regarding** this application on behalf of the applicant” then the advocate will receive all communications from the RAA

Are you an advocate, looking to help a tenant/client get help? \*

☒ Yes ☐ No

Advocate

Advocate Name \*

MI

Relationship to Applicant \*

Language Preference of Person You're Applying for \*

Advocate Phone Number \*


Advocate Email \*

Agency/Organization Name

Advocate Consent Confirmation \*

☒ Please check this box to confirm you have consent to submit this application on behalf of the applicant.

☐ Please check this box to confirm you have consent to communicate regarding this application on behalf of the client.



Advocates submitting application on behalf of an applicant can electronically sign on the applicant's behalf

# UPDATED COVID-19 IMPACT QUESTION



- DHCD revised the COVID impact question in the Central App to allow all applicants (who are otherwise eligible) to indicate they have had COVID impact

1 Instructions 2 Living Situation 3 COVID-19 4 Housing Crisis 5 Additional Questions 6 Applicant Information 7 Household Income 8 Request for Assistance 9 Owner Information 10 Your Required Documents 11 Application Certification and Contract

COVID-19

MANY HOUSEHOLDS IN MASSACHUSETTS HAVE BEEN FINANCIALLY AFFECTED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. PLEASE TELL US WHAT CHALLENGES YOU HAVE FACED SINCE THE PANDEMIC STARTED IN MARCH OF 2020. YOU CAN CHECK MORE THAN ONE BOX.

My tenant stated that they, or someone in their household \*

☐ Lost a job

☐ Collected unemployment benefits

☐ Had less income than usual (lower pay, fewer hours, or fewer clients if self-employed)

☐ Had to miss work, or stop working, or work fewer hours due to a health or medical need

☐ Had to miss work, or stop working, to take care of someone with health or medical needs

☐ Had to miss work, or stop working, or work fewer hours because my child's school or daycare was closed, or because my child had online school

☐ Had a roommate or household member move out, stop paying rent, or die, leaving me with higher housing costs

☐ Had higher bills than usual (for example, medical bills, transportation costs, childcare costs, funeral costs, rent, utilities, etc.)

☐ Had income that was too low to pay for basic household expenses (for example, food, clothing, rent, utilities, cleaning supplies, etc.)

☐ Other financial problems

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# CENTRAL PORTAL AND APPLICATION



Applicants and RAA staff will have access to a central portal. Applicants will be able to upload additional documentation using this portal if needed.

## Applicant Portal

## Cognito Application

- 1 Instructions
- 2 Living Situation
- 3 COVID-19
- 4 Housing Crisis
- 5 Applicant Information
- 6 Household Income
- 7 Request for Assistance
- 8 Your Required Documents
- 9 Application Certification and Contract

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

The Emergency Housing Payment Assistance application is free. No fee is required to apply, and free help is available to complete applications. Beware of scams by people charging an "application fee" to help submit an application. If you need help completing the application, contact your local RAA for free assistance.

This application for rental assistance will take 20-30 minutes. Please complete it in one sitting; you will not be able to save and return to it.

Be honest – if you give inaccurate or incomplete information, your application may be delayed or denied.

The application will ask you:

- About your current housing, and what challenges you may be facing
- For the names, dates of birth, and social security numbers of everyone in your household. You don't have to include a social security number if you don't have one.
- How much money everyone in your household makes.
- What kind of assistance you need
- For your landlord's contact information
- For signatures from all adults in your household

You will also have to submit the following documentation. Your application will be processed faster if you include all of these documents.

- ID for the head of household
- Proof of housing crisis (for example an eviction notice or letter saying you're behind on rent)
- Proof of housing (for example a lease)
- Proof of income (for example paystubs)

[Click here to learn more about required documentation.](#)

After you submit the application, a case manager from a Regional Administering Agency (RAA) will contact you. Please respond quickly when they do.

Next

- Landlords may use the Central App to apply on behalf of their tenant(s)
- The 20 unit maximum for using the landlord door **has been lifted**; there is no unit cap
  - Owners/operators of subsidized and public housing may continue to use the SHERA program
- Landlords must include a consent form signed by the tenant





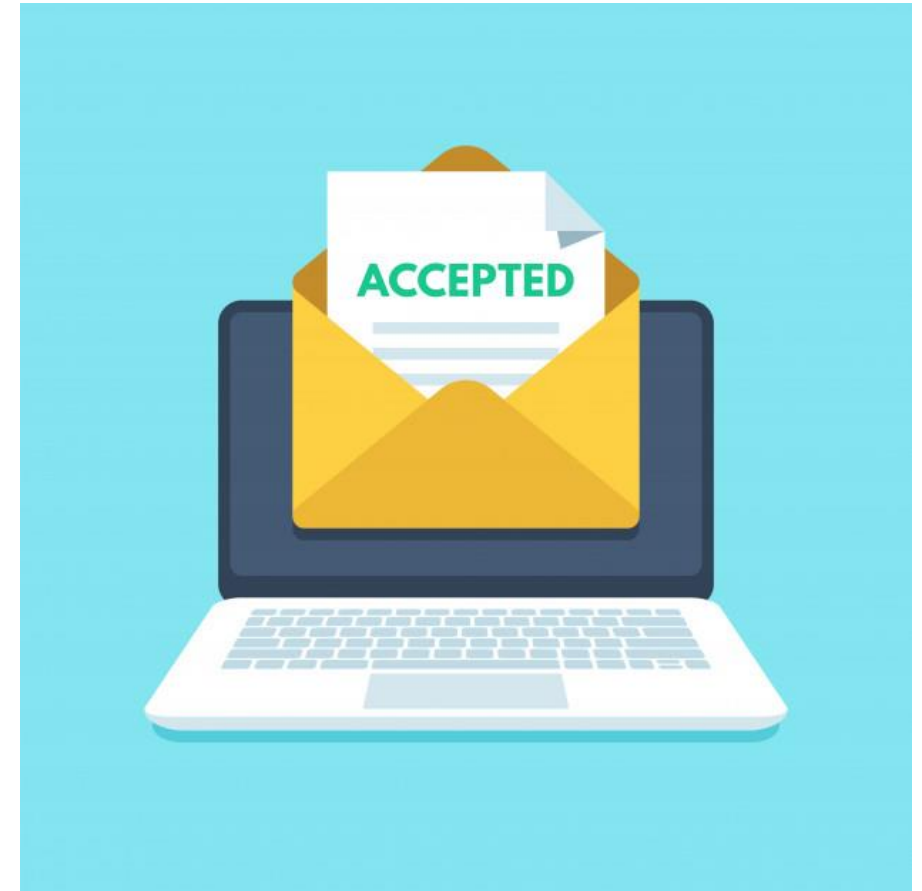
# APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

**An application that is fully complete, with all required documentation, will be processed faster.**

**Incomplete applications will be closed if documentation is not provided within 14 days of notification of missing documents.**

**Please ensure applicants have all documentation needed to apply.**

**Advocates are encouraged to complete online applications as much as possible as they will be processed faster** (*paper apps need to be keyed in by RAA staff before they can be processed*).



# REQUIRED DOCUMENTS



In order to apply to the **Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)**, renters will need to provide the following required documents:

## I.D. FOR HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

- ☐ This document will need to include the head of household's full name and date of birth. *Examples include a state issued driver's license, birth certificate, or passport.*

## PROOF OF CURRENT HOUSING

- ☐ This includes a lease, tenancy agreement or a tenancy at-will form

## VERIFICATION OF HOUSING CRISIS

- ☐ Notice of arrears or balance overdue (ledger)
- ☐ Notice of eviction
- ☐ Court summons
- ☐ Letter from host if doubled up
- ☐ Notice to quit

## VERIFICATION OF INCOME

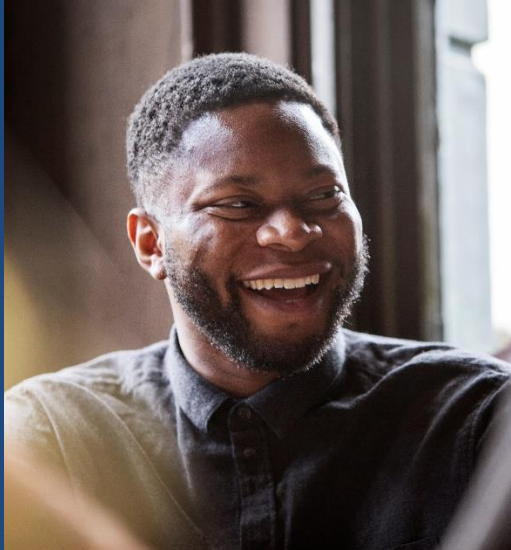
- 1. Presumed eligibility:** Households receiving benefits from the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) or most MassHealth plans are presumed eligible. **IF NOT, THEN....**
- 2. Benefit Letters:** Households can provide an income eligibility form from one of the following benefit programs:
  - Public housing (state or federal)
  - Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8)
  - State housing vouchers: MRVP, AHVP, DMH, or DDS housing vouchers
  - LIHEAP
  - Massachusetts subsidized childcare
  - Veterans Chapter 115 benefits
- 3. Self-Submitted Documents:**
  - Annual income may be verified by 2020 Form 1040 (s); OR
  - Monthly income may be verified by two paystubs from the past 60 days, plus most recent benefit letters (social security, child support, unemployment, etc.)

## REQUIRED LANDLORD FOLLOW-UP

- ☐ The tenant's landlord will need to provide a W-9 and proof of ownership before the application is approved.
- ☐ **PLEASE Request the Landlord/Owner email (preferred) and/or phone number**



# DEMO



**Alex Sullivan**

## Scenario:

My name is Alex Sullivan. I live in an apartment in Fall River with my wife and our two children, who are both under 18. We have been renting this apartment for 4 years now.

I am applying for emergency housing assistance because of a financial hardship due to COVID-19--during the pandemic, my wife reduced her hours to take on childcare while schools were closed, I lost my job and am receiving unemployment. We can't afford our rent on her salary alone.



# SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION AND NEXT STEPS

# REQUIRED NOTIFICATIONS – APPLICANTS, UTILITIES, AND LANDLORDS



**New applicants will be notified by email, phone, or mail at the following status changes.**

## Application Submitted

Applicants will receive an application submission receipt (emailed) that includes the Application ID to track the application moving forward.

## Missing Documentation

Applicants will be notified if there is any missing documentation. This communication will be from their Regional Administering Agency.

NOTE: Applicants can submit missing documentation through the Central Application Portal

## Close-Out or Denial

Applicants will be notified if they are:

**Denied:** Applicant is ineligible.

**Closed-Out:** Missing documentation (tenant or landlord), unresponsiveness leading to incomplete application.

## Approval

If an applicant is approved, they will be notified of approval and will be sent a copy of the landlord terms of agreement to participate.



Once an application has been submitted, the applicant is responsible for future communication unless you selected the box where you are communicating on their behalf.



Applicants will receive an email within 10-15 minutes with their application ID and the name of which RAA is processing their application. Applicants can use their zip code or date of birth and Application ID in the online portal to check which RAA is processing their application



RAAs may communicate with applicants by phone if they provide a contact number and indicate a preference



If an applicant does not have an email, you should ask if someone in their household has an active email account, they can use to receive communication regarding their application. As an advocate, you can choose to receive communication on behalf of the applicant.

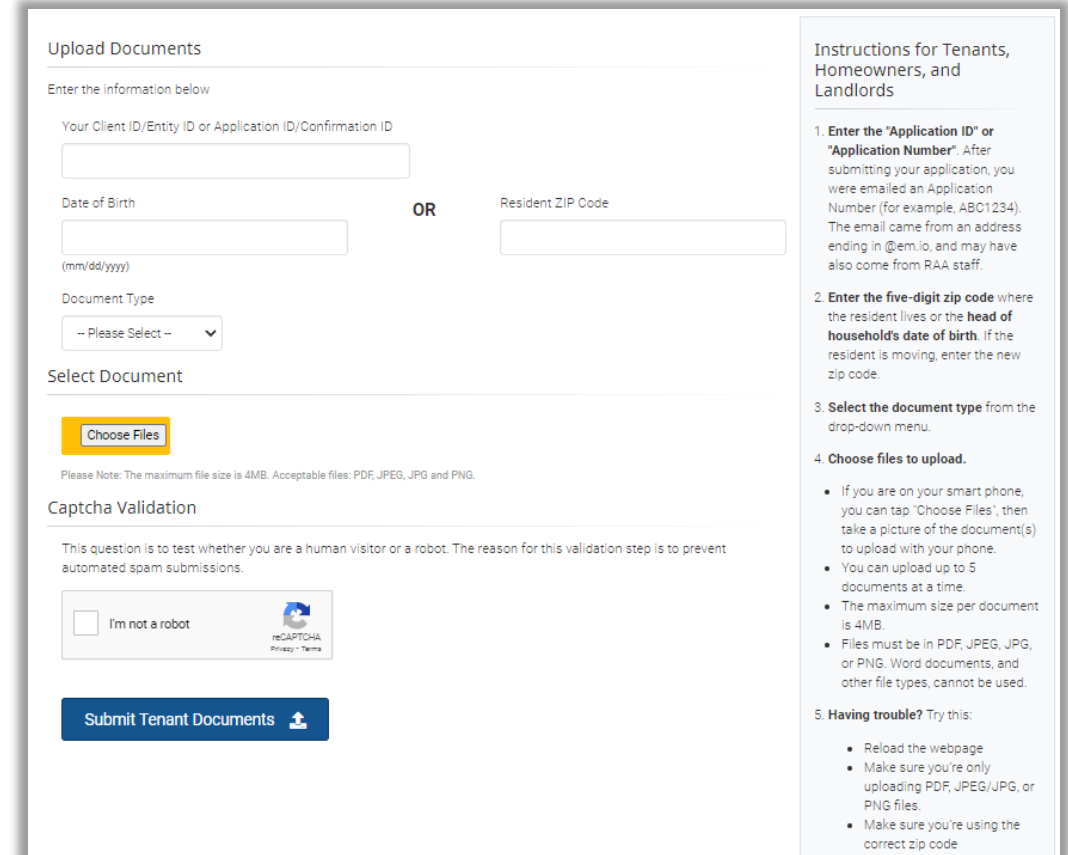
**When completing the application be sure to keep in mind the following:**

- ✓ Capture the **landlord email or phone** number for future RAA communication
- ✓ **Encourage applicants to keep a record of their application ID** for status updates and access within the portal

If needed, applicants will be able to upload additional documentation using this portal.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Massachusetts Emergency Housing Payment Assistance Portal. The header includes the phone number 781-442-4200, a language dropdown set to English, and navigation links for Home, Program Information, and RAA Login. The main banner features the state seal and the text: "WELCOME TO THE MASSACHUSETTS EMERGENCY HOUSING PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PORTAL. Use this portal to upload additional documents and see which RAA is processing your application." Below the banner, under "Available Services", there are three cards. The first card, "Upload Documents:", is highlighted with a green border and contains the text "Upload additional documentation for your application" and a "More >>" button. The second card, "Application Info:", contains the text "Check basic information about application" and a "More >>" button. The third card, "Help:", contains the text "Please contact us at (781) 442-4200".



The screenshot shows the "Upload Documents" form. It includes a header "Upload Documents" and a sub-header "Enter the information below". The form has fields for "Your Client ID/Entity ID or Application ID/Confirmation ID", "Date of Birth" (with a format hint "(mm/dd/yyyy)"), and "Resident ZIP Code". There is an "OR" option between the date of birth and zip code fields. Below these is a "Document Type" dropdown menu with the text "-- Please Select --". A "Select Document" section contains a "Choose Files" button. A "Please Note" message states: "The maximum file size is 4MB. Acceptable files: PDF, JPEG, JPG and PNG." A "Captcha Validation" section includes a checkbox for "I'm not a robot" and a reCAPTCHA logo. A "Submit Tenant Documents" button is at the bottom. On the right side, there are "Instructions for Tenants, Homeowners, and Landlords" with a numbered list of steps: 1. Enter the "Application ID" or "Application Number". 2. Enter the five-digit zip code. 3. Select the document type. 4. Choose files to upload. 5. Having trouble? Try this: (Reload the webpage, Make sure you're only uploading PDF, JPEG/JPG, or PNG files, Make sure you're using the correct zip code).

*The **Application ID** is required to upload documents*



# PORTAL

# EMERGENCY HOUSING PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PORTAL



## Upload Documents

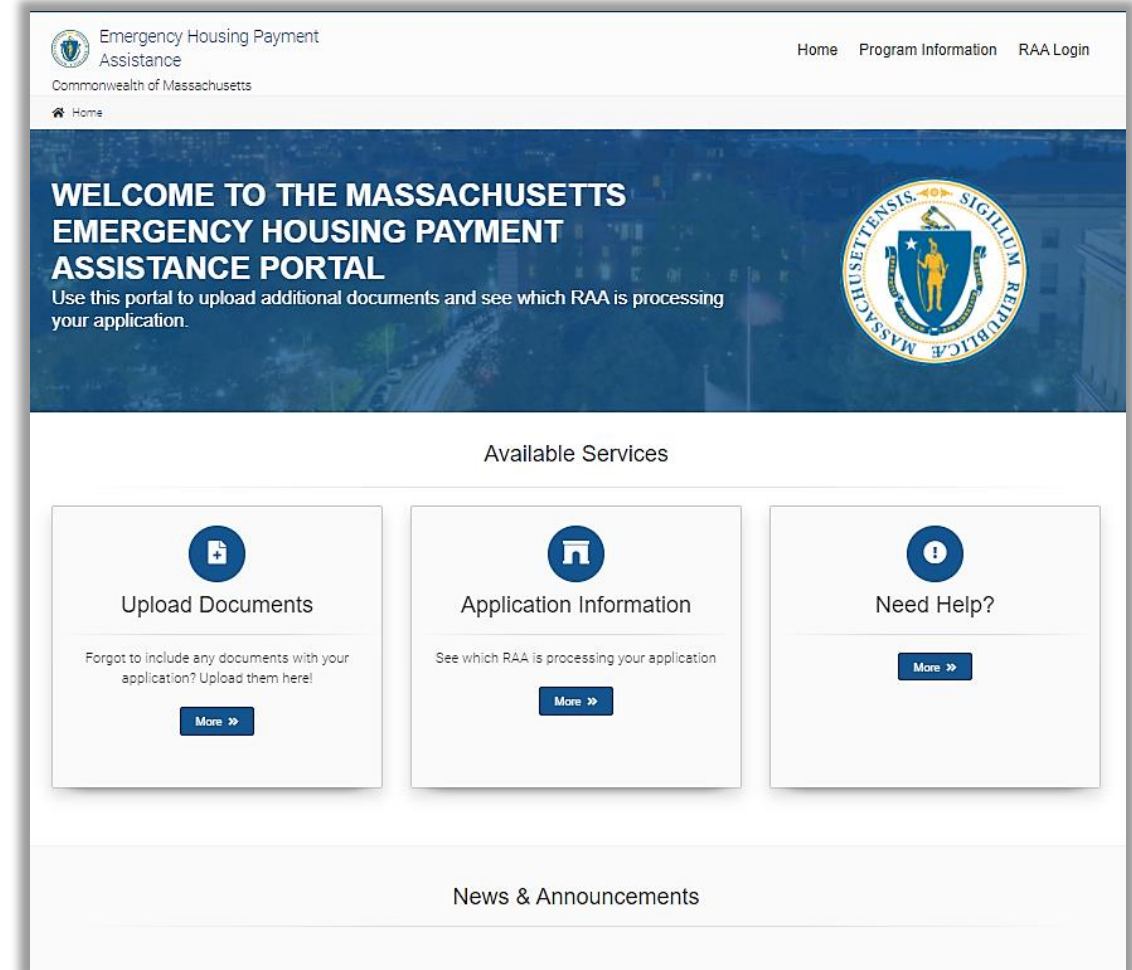
Allows applicants and property owners to upload new or missing documentation necessary as part of the application and eligibility verification

## Application Information

Allows applicants to see which agency is processing their application

## Need Help?

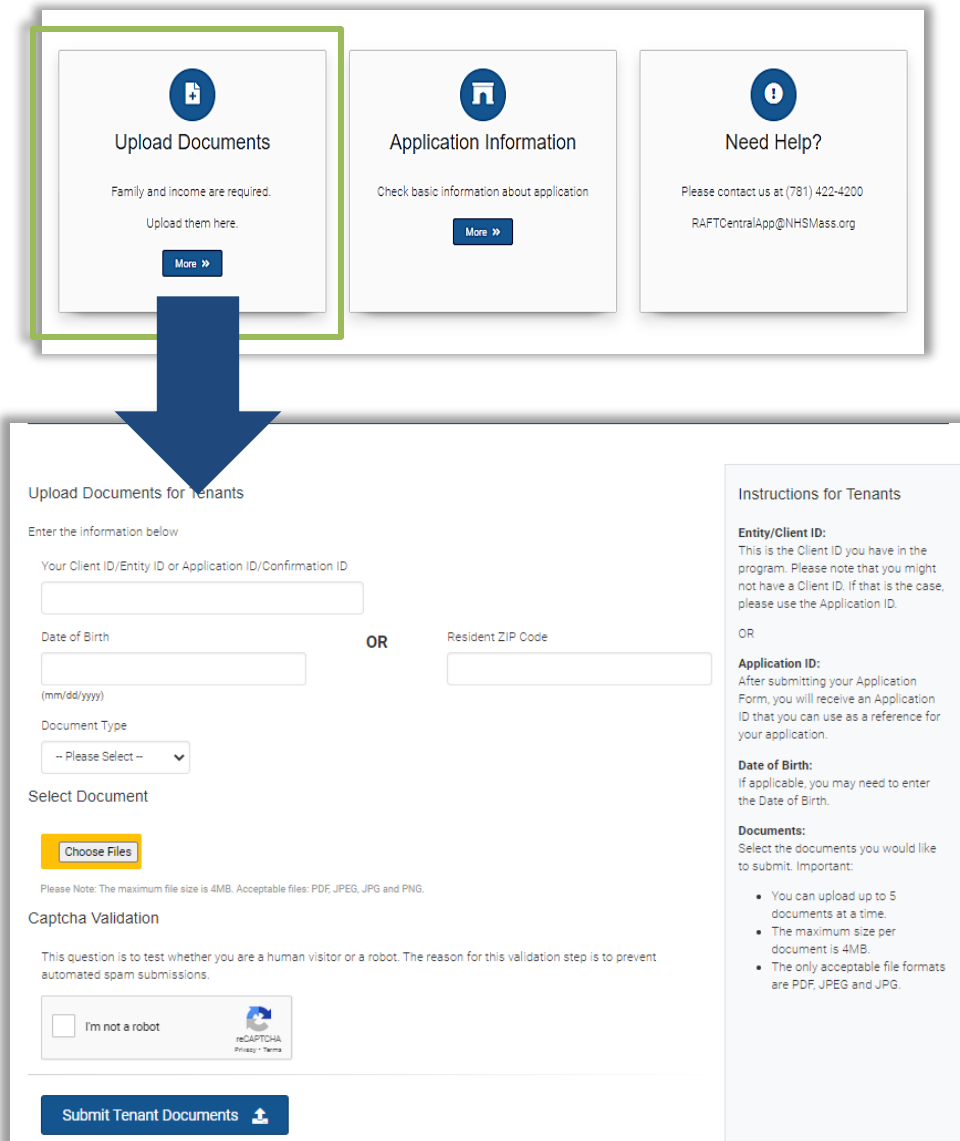
Applicants have access to the contact information to answer questions or receive assistance



Applicants and Property Owners will use the portal to upload any additional documentation. The documentation can be a photo or PDF file.



**Note: The Application ID is required to upload documents to the portal**



**Upload Documents**  
Family and Income are required.  
Upload them here.  
[More »](#)

**Application Information**  
Check basic information about application.  
[More »](#)

**Need Help?**  
Please contact us at (781) 422-4200  
[RAFTCentralApp@NHSMass.org](mailto:RAFTCentralApp@NHSMass.org)

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**Upload Documents for Tenants**

Enter the information below

Your Client ID/Entity ID or Application ID/Confirmation ID

Date of Birth  OR Resident ZIP Code   
(mm/dd/yyyy)


Document Type


Select Document  
[Choose Files](#)

Please Note: The maximum file size is 4MB. Acceptable files: PDF, JPEG, JPG and PNG.

Captcha Validation

This question is to test whether you are a human visitor or a robot. The reason for this validation step is to prevent automated spam submissions.

☐ I'm not a robot 

[Submit Tenant Documents](#) 

**Instructions for Tenants**

**Entity/Client ID:**  
This is the Client ID you have in the program. Please note that you might not have a Client ID. If that is the case, please use the Application ID.

OR

**Application ID:**  
After submitting your Application Form, you will receive an Application ID that you can use as a reference for your application.

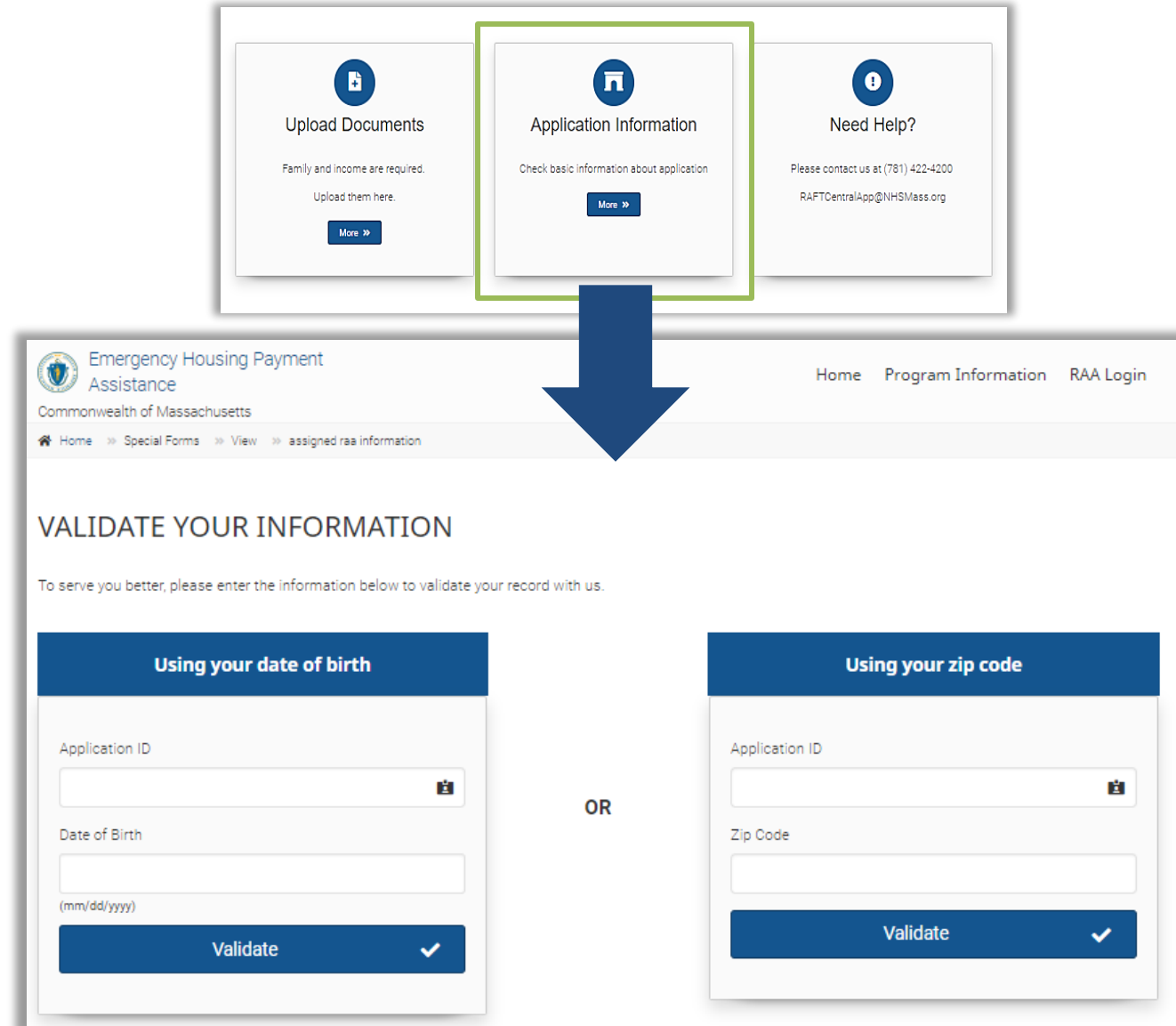
**Date of Birth:**  
If applicable, you may need to enter the Date of Birth.

**Documents:**  
Select the documents you would like to submit. Important:

- You can upload up to 5 documents at a time.
- The maximum size per document is 4MB.
- The only acceptable file formats are PDF, JPEG and JPG.

Applicants and Property Owners will use the “Application Information” tile to identify which RAA has their application.

Applicants and Property owners will need to input their **Application ID** and **Zip Code** or **Date of Birth**.



**Application Information**

Check basic information about application

[More »](#)

**VALIDATE YOUR INFORMATION**

To serve you better, please enter the information below to validate your record with us.

**Using your date of birth**

Application ID

Date of Birth

(mm/dd/yyyy)

[Validate](#)

**OR**

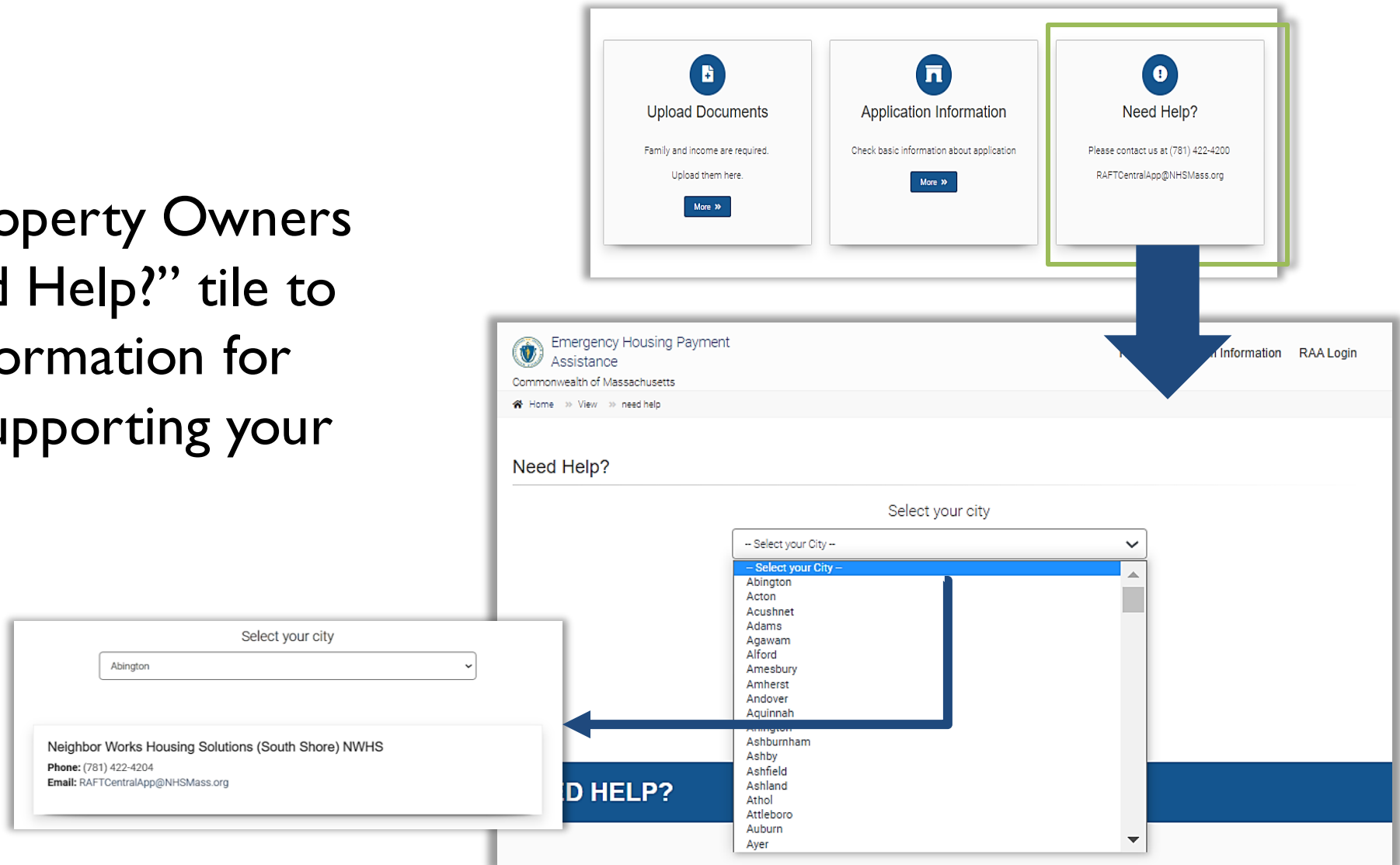
**Using your zip code**

Application ID

Zip Code

[Validate](#)

Applicants and Property Owners can use the “Need Help?” tile to access contact information for the RAA that is supporting your city.



The image shows a sequence of steps on the Emergency Housing Payment Assistance website. At the top, three tiles are visible: 'Upload Documents', 'Application Information', and 'Need Help?'. The 'Need Help?' tile is highlighted with a green border and a blue arrow points down to the 'Need Help?' section of the website. The website header includes the logo, 'Emergency Housing Payment Assistance', 'Commonwealth of Massachusetts', and navigation links. The 'Need Help?' section features a 'Select your city' dropdown menu. A blue arrow points from the dropdown to a callout box that displays the contact information for Neighbor Works Housing Solutions (South Shore) NWHS in Abington.

**Need Help?**

Select your city

-- Select your City --

- Abington
- Acton
- Acushnet
- Adams
- Agawam
- Alford
- Amesbury
- Amherst
- Andover
- Aquinnah
- Ashburnham
- Ashby
- Ashfield
- Ashland
- Athol
- Attleboro
- Auburn
- Ayer

**NEED HELP?**

Select your city

Abington

Neighbor Works Housing Solutions (South Shore) NWHS  
Phone: (781) 422-4204  
Email: RAFTCentralApp@NHSMass.org



# QUESTIONS



# RESOURCES

# APPLY NOW SITE



- ✓ Link to the Central Application
- ✓ Required Documentation List
- ✓ Quick Eligibility Checker
- ✓ AMI Calculator
- ✓ Frequently Asked Questions
- ✓ Step by Step Application and Portal Instructions
- ✓ Additional Resources

Link: [www.mass.gov/covidhousinghelp](https://www.mass.gov/covidhousinghelp)

**How to Apply for Emergency Housing Payment Assistance**

Massachusetts can help you with overdue rent payments (as well as overdue utilities or mortgage payments). Learn how to submit a complete application below.

**Notices & Alerts** [Hide Notices & Alerts](#)

**Eviction Protections** | Aug. 4, 2021, 03:38 pm

[Apply Now for Assistance +](#)

**THE DETAILS** **CONTACT**

**What you need**

**Required Documentation**

- ID for Head of Household
- Proof of Current Housing
- Verification of Housing Crisis
- Verification of Income

You must submit a complete application with all required documents to quickly receive your benefits.

Additionally, we encourage tenants to reach out **early** to their landlords, and inform them about an ERAP application. Landlords or property management will be needed to complete the process.

Check your eligibility using this tool:

Let's see if you might be eligible for Emergency Housing Payment Assistance.

This optional form will ask you a few questions to see if you might be eligible for

**CONTACT**

Massachusetts 2-1-1

**Phone**

Informational and referral hotline  
211  
(877) 211-6277  
24 hours a day, 7 days a week. All calls are free and confidential. Interpreter services are available in multiple languages.  
TTY (508) 370-4890

**Online**

Live chat  
Massachusetts 2-1-1 website +

**RELATED**

Need access to a computer to apply? Locate your local library. +

Facing eviction? We can help. +

¿Se enfrenta al desalojo? Podemos ayudar. +

Está enfrentando uma ação de despejo? Podemos ajudar. +

1

## [DHCD Website](#)

Visit the DHCD Rental Assistance Website for more information on ERAP

2

## [EDI Portal](#)

Central resource to provide partners with key updates, FAQs, training materials and helpful info. **Meeting Materials**, included a recording of this session will be shared and uploaded.

3

## [Public Information Campaign Portal](#)

Includes promotional materials, and summary of how to submit an application

4

## **Community Mediation**

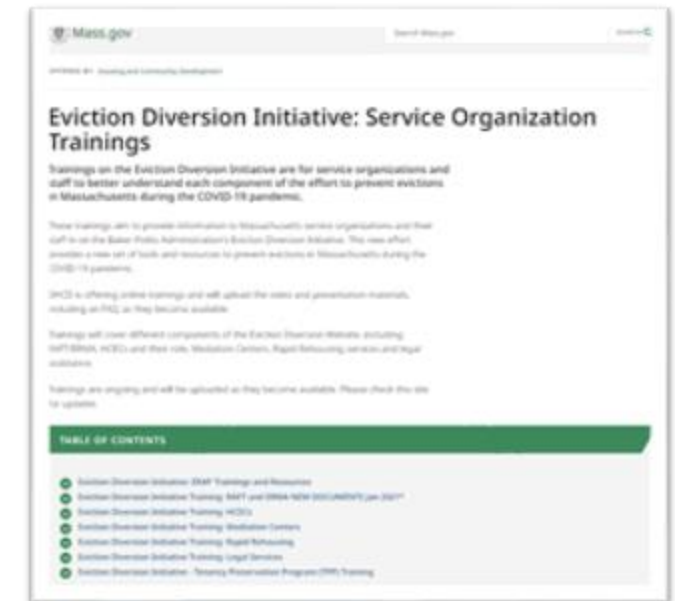
Local non-profits are available to help landlords and tenants resolve disputes. <https://www.resolutionma.org/housing>

5

## **COVID Eviction Legal Help Project**

Visit <https://evictionlegalhelp.org/> to search for free or low-cost legal help

1. [Central Application User Guide](#)
2. [Central Application Portal Guide](#)
3. [Central Application FAQ](#)





THANK YOU!