



DEPARTMENT OF
CAREER SERVICES

Workforce Issuance

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☐ Policy ☒ Information

To: Chief Elected Officials
MassHire Workforce Board Chairs
MassHire Workforce Board Directors
MassHire Career Center Directors
MassHire Fiscal Officers
MassHire DCS Operations Managers

cc: WIOA State Partners

From: Alice Sweeney, Director
MassHire Department of Career Services

Date: April 6, 2021

Subject: Department of Housing & Community Development – Rental Assistance Update

Purpose: To notify MassHire Workforce Boards, MassHire Career Center Operators, and other local workforce partners of rental assistance updates released through the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

Background: In January, the RAFT (Rental Assistance for Families in Transition) program served 2,676 unique households and delivered \$9.8 million in housing stability funds and in February, 5,463 households were served, and \$21.1 million dollars distributed. March was expected to surpass January and February combined.

The CDC has amended and extended the federal moratorium through June 30, 2021 ([you can find the language of the extension here](#)). Federal funding was introduced into the system, to start leveraging the substantial resources in the 2020 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

Since the funding was announced, the team at DHCD, in partnership with regional administering agencies, the courts, and other major stakeholders, have

An equal opportunity employer/program.

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

TDD/TTY 1-800-439-2370 - Voice 1-800-439-0183

worked to revamp the system to meet this next phase. As further guidance from the federal government was received in January and February, it became clear that an immense opportunity to address both immediate needs and long-term investments existed in service delivery to low-income families who are struggling.

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) is the new funding mechanism to disburse state and federal funding. The aim is to leverage as much federal funding as possible, while still making sure existing programs continue to serve special populations. For example, federal funds are only available to support renters, whereas RAFT/ERMA (Emergency Rent and Mortgage Assistance) will continue to make funds available to low-income homeowners.

Right now, applicants won't notice a major difference, and applications in the pipeline will have access to higher benefit levels. In addition, applicants who may have already received RAFT/ERMA benefits are eligible to reapply if they need further assistance.

ERAP is available to households earning less than 80% AMI (Area Median Income), and includes enhanced benefits, including:

- Renters and landlords may receive up to **12 months of assistance** with past due rent, plus up to 3 months of future rent.
- Renters may also **receive up to \$1,500 for overdue utilities accrued after March 13, 2020.**

Additionally, the **Subsidized Housing Emergency Rental Assistance (SHERA)** is a collaboration with MassHousing and the Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) to enable qualified operators to apply directly for funding on behalf of income-eligible tenants. This will expedite relief to tenants in need, while also allowing RAFT-administering agencies to concentrate on applications from non-subsidized tenants in need of assistance.

Action

- Requested:** Please share with managers, staff, partners and customers as appropriate. There are a number of ways organizations can help connect households in need:
- **Spread the word** - Please let people know that there is additional funding available, even if they previously received RAFT/ERMA. Social media materials, including flyers, a new promo video, and other materials are available on the [Public Information Campaign page](#).
 - **Learn about the application** - It is vital that renters submit an application that is as complete as possible. It can add a great deal of processing time to an application if documents are missing. There are new, public-facing guides to help both applicants and service providers gain a better understanding of

how to fill out a complete application (available on [Public Information Campaign Page](#) and [Service Organizations Training Page](#)).

Making sure an application is submitted in its entirety can make a huge difference and engaging a landlord early in the process. When incomplete applications are submitted, it can take weeks for staff to track down documents and other information necessary to move the application from the review stage to final approval. Upwards of 80% of applications arrive incomplete, which hampers the ability to make payments quickly. These new resources guide households in need will submit more complete applications and receive help as fast as possible.

Effective: Immediately

Inquiries: Please reach out to Ryan Ambrose, ryan.ambrose@mass.gov with any questions.