

# Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

Review: HAPPY & Data Quality

September 10, 2021



# WELCOME

## ENGAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES



#### **Please Mute**

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



#### **Engage During Meeting**

#### I.Teams Chat

#### Send a message in the **Teams Chat** panel

- I. Type in your **question**
- 2. Hit Enter



#### 2. Questions

- We will be monitoring the Teams Chat for questions throughout the session
- We will triage questions during designated checkpoints

#### THIS CALL IS BEING RECORDED











## Purpose



Review guidance related to HAPPY reporting and how to prevent common errors

# Goal

Provide RAA staff with **guidance and continued support** related to ERAP and other EDI programs



# HAPPY GUIDANCE



- HAPPY is a state-wide database used to make payments for RAFT, ERMA, HomeBASE, and ERAP. It collects demographic and program data for reporting purposes.
  - Payments made directly out of Happy
  - Happy is used for reporting to Legislature and Treasury, as well as Public Records Requests, policy decisions and fiscal tracking
- Guidance for Happy data entry is uniform across the state, but practical use may vary based on your RAA's processing structure
  - Payment entry guide available on RAA portal
- Use Happy Support line or MRI portal to log technical issues, escalate to Molly Butman as needed

## PAYMENT ENTRY OVERVIEW





- Always search before entering a new household
- Use one record per household, retain program history



• Update all required tabs / fields prior to locking in any transactions



#### The Program tab has been updated to reflect the appropriate fields required for ERAP. Now, all fields must be **completed** for an applicant to receive a payment.

#### **Required for all**

- Monthly Rent
- Total Arrearage Amount
- Landlord DoorY/N
- Approval/Denial Date
- Application Date
- Housing Crisis
- Income tier
- Arrearage # Months Paid
- Earliest Date of ٠ **Arrears Paid**
- ERAP Status
- Central App # (if applicable)

Required for recerts	SELECTED PROGRAM UDF FIEL	DS					
#Times Recertified	ТЕХТ		NUMBER		VALUE LIST		
					Housing Crisis	PCRA	~
			Monthly rent	1200	Income	15-30	~
<ul> <li>Total # months paid</li> </ul>			Total rent arrearage amount	12000	Arrearage # Months Paid	10	~
					Earliest date of arrears paid	C June -	~
<ul> <li>Formstack ID</li> </ul>	Central App Application #	FAKE123456					
					# Times Recertified	01	~
• Recert Denial /			Formstack ID	85565415	Total #months paid(ARR+future)	16	~
					Recert Denial/Timeout		~
timeout (if							
applicable)	Landlord Door Y/N	Ν					
			DATE				
			Approval / Denial Date	3/18/2021			
			Application Date	1/1/2020			
					ERAP Status	A	~

#### \*All information in this screenshot is fictious and for demonstrative purposes only.

### COMMON ERRORS – PROGRAM TAB

- If you **accidentally make a program line**, please do the following:
  - Erase all start and end dates
  - Erase all data from fields
  - Make the program status inactive
  - Keep program lines active for recent RAFT/ERAP participants
  - If switching programs post payment entry, go back to program tab to confirm there is an active program line
- Do not autopilot on program tab review with a critical eye to make sure the data makes sense
  - Examples on next slide

ERAP Start Date: 9/1/2021	Active
ERAP Start Date:	Active
ERAP Start Date:	Active
ERAP Start Date:	Active 😈

Initial Data	Household	Unit Data	Owner
ERAP			
Start Date: 8/2 RAFT	5/2921		Active
Start Date: 8/1	9/2021		Inactive
RAFT Start Date: 9/1	/2020		inactive
			1



## COMMON ERRORS – PROGRAM TAB



- Blank Fields
- Housing crisis (none or other letter)
- Mismatch in arrearage # months, earliest date of arrears, and total arrearage
  - Please do not enter utility arrearage on program tab

\$875

\$21,323,56

VALUE LIST

Housing Crisis

Arrearage # Mont Earliest date of a

Income

- Please avoid using decimal points or dollar signs
- Subsidized clients with high rent or market rate clients with zero/low rent

ERAP • 🖒 Start Date: 6/4/2021 Adive	SELECTED PROGRAM DETAILS Program Status Start Date Start Date End Date Funding Limit Type Linked Program	the second	Funding Limit \$35.0 Adual Payments - \$419 Projected Payments - Remaining Balance = \$34.5	
SELECTED PROGRAM UDF FIELDS	Screening Questionnaire	٥		
TEXT	NUMBER Monthly rent Total rent arrearage amount	419 00	VALUE LIST Housing Crisis Income Arrearage # Months Paid Earliest date of arrears paid	NONE - 15-30 - 00 - Z None -
Central App Application # SELECT OTHER PROGRAM TO VIEW DETAILS ERAP Start Date: 8/18/2021 Adam	SELECTED PROGRAM DETAILS Program Status Adve -	Funding		
	Start Date 8/18/2021 End Date 12/21/2021 Funding Limit Type 12 Rolling Months Linked Program Screening Questionnaire			
SELECTED PROGRAM UOF FIELDS TEXT Central App Application #	End Date 12/31/2021 Funding Limit Type 12 Rolling Months Linked Program	VALUE 1 S905.00 84,240.00 Arrearso	ments 50,762.88 Payments 51,970.00 g Balance \$26,267.12	
TEXT	End Date 12/31/2021 Funding Limit Type 27 Rolling Months Screening Cuestionnaire	VALUE 1 S905.00 84,240.00 Arrearso	menta 54,762.88 Paymenta 51,970.00 g Balance 526,267.12 IST Citais E 0 0 e # Months Paid 04 bate of arrears gaid N May 2021	THER ×

NUMBER

Monthly rent

Total rent arrearage amount



- Please do *not* add new program line
  - Fill in the (below) recert fields on current ERAP program line
- To find total # months paid (rolling total)
  - Combine the first ARR # months paid + stipends from first benefit + stipends from recert
  - In most cases, Total # months should be 6 higher than original ARR # months paid
- Do not change application or approval date
- Recert denials
  - If household had received ERAP in the past, but recert is denied select appropriate reason and fill in Formstack ID
  - If household did not receive ERAP, do not add new program line to enter denial

		# Times Recertified	01	~
Formstack ID	85565415	Total #months paid(ARR+future)	16	~
		Recert Denial/Timeout	Other Over I	it Exceed Other rea ncome O Out Time
DATE				



### These are common mistakes to look out for and avoid:

- Stipends in subsidized units
- Prospective rent in subsidized unit through ERAP
- Paying tenant through RAFT/ERMA
- Using incorrect payment codes
  - Do not use FLM, SD, UTLDep
- Missing account numbers for utility payments
- Mismatched program and increment
- Missing tenant ID
- Paying stipends as ARR

## OTHER COMMON ERRORS

- Entering incorrect tenant ID
- Changing tenant ID
- Missing housing type
- Incorrect / missing birthdays for HOH

15

Dash	board	Tenants
Te	enant ID	Tenant Name
T	106312	Kistina Mellor
• т	106312	Atoxoador Petroulas

Creation Date	Time	User	Location	Record	Field	Previous	Current	
06/28/2021	3:51:28 PM		Transaction Item	Accounting Adjustment - 7/1/2021	Trans Item Posted Date		6/28/2021	^
05/26/2021	4:14:16 PM		Transaction Item	Accounting Adjustment - 6/1/2021	Trans Item Posted Date		5/25/2021	
05/14/2021	3:37:24 PM		Transaction Item	Accounting Adjustment - 4/1/2021	Trans Item Posted Date		5/14/2021	
05/14/2021	3:37:24 PM		Transaction Item	Accounting Adjustment - 5/1/2021	Trans Item Posted Date		5/14/2021	_
05/13/2021	8:05:32 AM		Member		Member Citizenship		EC	
05/13/2021	7:01:45 AM		Member		Member Race Code		1	
05/13/2021	7:01:45 AM		Member		Member Race Code		1	
05/13/2021	7:01:45 AM		Member		Member Race Code		1	
04/29/2021	11:24:09 AM		Tenant		Tenant ID	100023809	T782	







- Always search by SSN and name before entering new household
- Avoid searching for units when entering address in unit tab, always create new
- Keep a list of common vendors handy to speed up data entry
- Use the green arrows to navigate from one tab to another
- Log out of Happy every night using the silhouette at the top right
- If another RAA asks for a client to be released prioritize and let them know ASAP that it has been done
- Review weekly data check let DHCD know if you do not understand the highlighted errors



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs): HAPPY Edition

#### Question # I



What should RAA staff do if they notice an applicant is entered twice in HAPPY, for example with two different last names?



The program entry should be entered into the HAPPY entry with the associated program payments. For instance, if the applicant is receiving additional ERAP benefits, it would be entered where the initial ERAP benefit was listed.





If a recert applicant answers "No" to needing additional assistance, do RAAs need to enter the applicant in HAPPY?

Yes, these instances should be reported in HAPPY as denials in the recert section of the Program tab, and staff should use the drop down to indicate the reason most accurately.



#### How do RAAs report when a recert applicant's landlord/owner increased the rent?



RAA staff should update the rent amount in HAPPY and obtain documentation of the new rent amount for the file.





#### How do you verify duplicate checks in HAPPY?



Duplication checks should continue to be performed in HAPPY. Keep the following in mind:

I. RAAs should search for the HOH in HAPPY to see if they have received RAFT or ERAP previously.

This search should be done by checking for the HOH as a "Member" instead of a "Tenant" to ensure that the search includes households where the HOH may have been a household member on another HOH's household.

2. RAAs should then search to see whether there may be overlapping benefits.

3. If there may be overlap/duplication of benefits, RAAs should investigate whether prior benefits covered the same time period.



# PROCESSING GOAL UPDATE

## Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program Spending Goal by Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>





- 59.6% of ERA1 funds have been spent or committed as of 9/4 (\$260.3M)\*
  - Includes \$43M admin
  - \$6M stabilization
  - \$5M SHERA
  - \$40M COVID RAFT allocated to ERA1 in June
  - The majority—\$165M—is from ERAP
  - Gap of \$23M to be made up by 9/30 to hit 65% goal
- In addition, 8% of ERA2 funds have been spent or committed (\$25M, with \$16M from ERAP)

\*65% of ERA1 funds must be spent or committed by September 30, 2021



# POLICY UPDATES



- On the Central Application, only the Head of Household will need to sign the application
- Cognito applications and paper applications still request all adult household member signatures
- However, RAAs are allowed to process applications without adult household member signatures, as long as the head of household has signed
  - This is true even if the application was an "old" application, a Cognito application, or a paper application
  - Adult household members' information (name, DOB, SSN if they have one, etc.) still need to be collected and their income still needs to be included in the household's income calculation



- When an RAA is making a direct payment to a tenant, proof of the amount owed is required
- However, if the tenant cannot provide a breakdown of the months of arrears owed (such as a rent ledger), the tenant may self-certify that the arrearage is less than 18 months and for rent after March 13, 2020
  - This should be a written statement, such as a signed letter or an email from the tenant, that is kept in the tenant file
  - This policy is outlined in the Paying Tenants Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)
  - This self-certification is only allowed for direct payments to tenants. If an RAA is
    paying a landlord, the RAA must collect proof of the months owed



# CENTRAL APP UPDATES









# RESOURCES

#### RESOURCES



#### **RAA Resource Portal**

Central resource to provide RAA staff with key updates, training and learning opportunities, and helpful information to support programs

#### FAQs

Comprehensive list of FAQs spanning a variety of topics

≡ Menu	💽 🌐 Select Language 🗸	Lange State Organizations	📲 Log In to	
🖲 Mass.gov	Search Mass.gov		SEARCH <b>Q</b>	
DFFERED BY Housing and Community Development				

#### **Regional Administering Agencies Resource Portal**

WELCOME TO THE REGIONAL ADMINISTERING AGENCIES (RAA) RESOURCE PORTAL

DHCD is partnering with RAAs to create more cross learning and engagement opportunities so that we are better positioned to reach our shared goals. We invite RAA staff to use this page to learn about key updates, training and learning opportunities, and provide helpful information to support our programs.

DHCD continues to work with RAAs to streamline and implement initiatives that support the administration of the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT), Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance (ERMA), and the Housing Consumer Education Centers of Massachusetts (HCEC) Programs. Thank you for your ongoing support of Massachusetts households. This repository of information is specifically intended to be used by RAAs so please avoid sharing this link with other parties.

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 EVICTION DIVERSION INITIATIVE (EDI) OVERVIEW

EVICTION DIVERSION INITIATIVE (EDI) PROGRAMS

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

Office Hour Training sessions will occur every Friday from 1:00PM-2:00PM, covering a variety of topics aimed at sharing knowledge about EDI programming and increasing engagement with the RAAs. Weekly topics and dial-in information will be shared with RAA staff in advance of each session.

## QUESTIONS





#### **Further Questions**

Direct questions to your supervisor and then contact the RAA support inbox (<u>dhcdraaraft@mass.gov</u>) as a point of escalations for questions. A member of the RAA Support Team will respond.

- Time-sensitive Questions: Critical questions that require responses within 24hrs should be submitted with a subject line that includes "URGENT."
- Example: Tenant is facing imminent loss of housing (24 hours) and applicant does not necessarily fit guidelines.



#### **Best Practice**

Please **specify the program** that you are reaching out about to ensure that the DHCD RAA Support team is best positioned to provide policy guidance.



# THANK YOU!

