



SHERA Overview Session

CELHP & Community Mediation

July 23, 2021

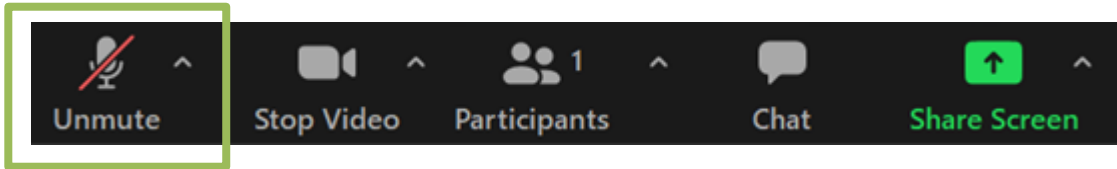
Last Updated: July 20, 2021



ENGAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES

Please Mute

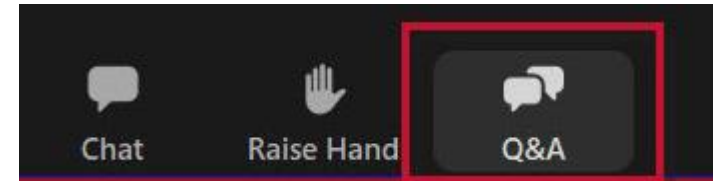
Please join the meeting muted during the session to keep interruptions to a minimum



Asking Questions

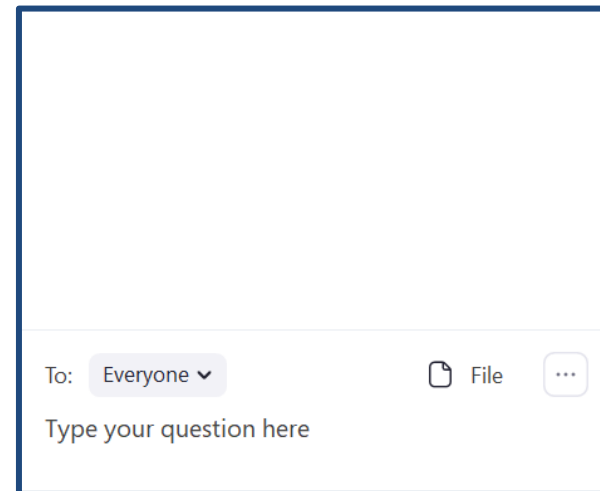
We will be monitoring the Q&A for questions

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.

THIS CALL IS BEING RECORDED



MEET YOUR FACILITATORS



Rob Muollo
DHCD

Edward Chien
DHCD

Christopher Jee
DHCD

TRAINING & PROGRAM SUPPORT

Accenture



Our Journey Today

60 MINUTES



Training Goals & Objectives



SHERA Program Overview & Accomplishments



SHERA Owner Eligibility



Property & Household Eligibility



SHERA Required Documentation



Reminders & Support



Questions



Purpose



Review the **Subsidized Housing Emergency Rental Assistance (SHERA) Program** and provide an understanding of the program and policies

Goal



Provide guidance so you can better **support property owners and tenants** who are eligible for SHERA



SHERA OVERVIEW



SHERA PROGRAM OVERVIEW & BENEFITS



The **Subsidized Housing Emergency Rental Assistance (SHERA) Program** is a federally funded emergency housing assistance program for renters impacted by COVID-19. The Massachusetts affordable housing owner and property management network can help residents pay COVID-related rent arrears from April 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021

Bulk Uploads

Owner-based, online process to apply on behalf of multiple households in a single application.

Income Certification

Most owners can document tenant income eligibility through 2020 or 2021 income verifications already required to comply with state or federal programs.

Response Time

The average time from application submission to approval is 20 days, with direct payment to the owner / authorized agent.

Eviction Diversion Pledge

Build on pledge of working with households to divert eviction due to rent arrearages and keep residents stably housed. Owners will continue to refer tenants to the RAAs for utility and moving expense assistance.

DHCD in partnership with MassHousing and Massachusetts Housing Partnership (“MHP”)





SHERA PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS

The program went live on May 20, 2021, as of July 19, 2021, SHERA has....



SHERA PROGRAM MODEL **NATIONALLY** RECOGNIZED



ASSISTED **175** PROPERTIES



20-DAY AVERAGE FROM
SUBMISSION TO PAYMENT



ASSISTED **884** HOUSEHOLDS



4.5 MONTHS AVERAGE
RENTAL ARREARS



COMMITTED / PAID
\$2,256,489 IN OVERDUE
RENT

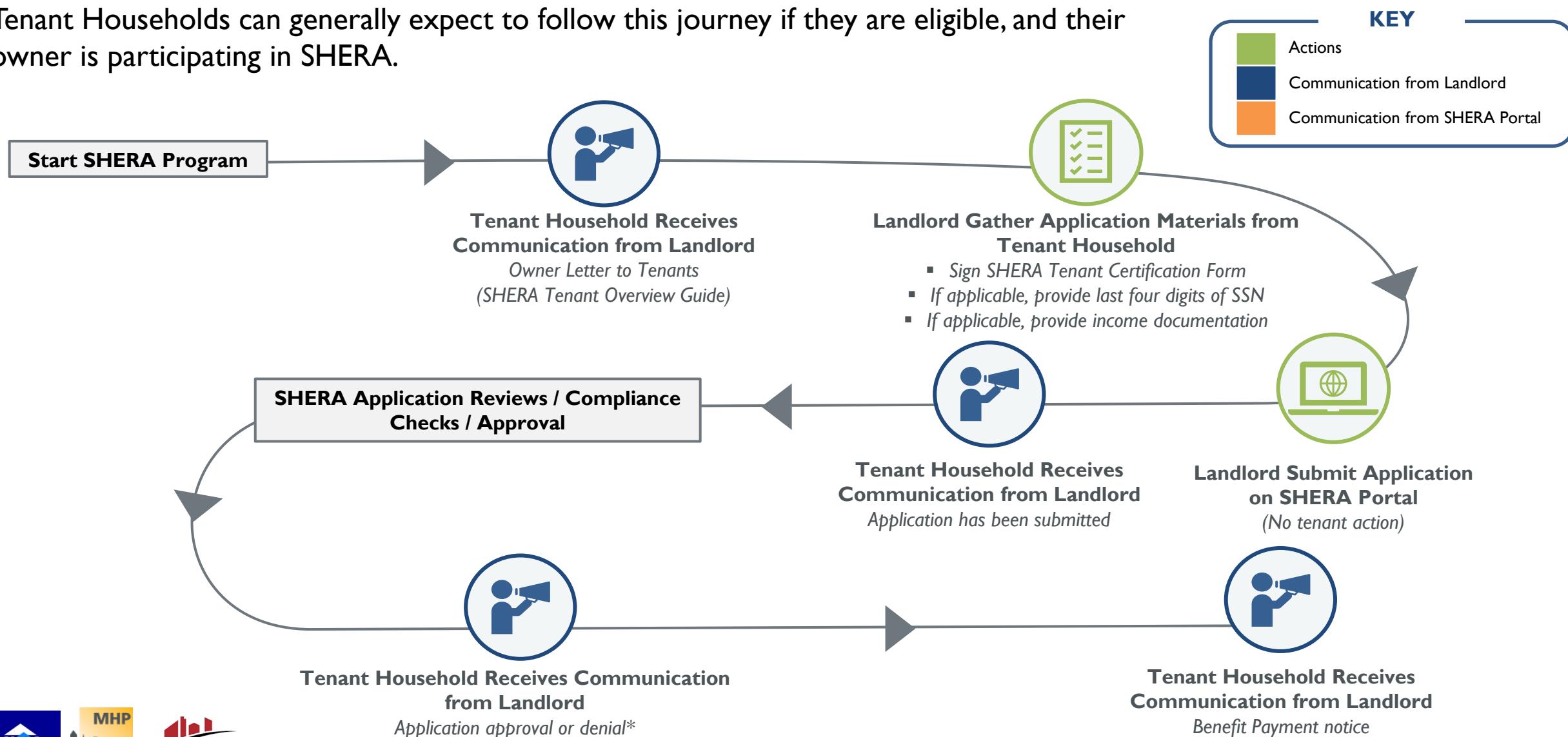


\$2,552 AVERAGE RENT
ARRERAGE AMOUNT PER
HOUSEHOLD

SHERA TENANT HOUSEHOLD JOURNEY



Tenant Households can generally expect to follow this journey if they are eligible, and their owner is participating in SHERA.



*Tenant claim denials will be communicated to owners and tenants by DHCD



When is it advised for tenants to use SHERA vs ERAP?

- Tenant households should use SHERA instead of the Commonwealth's existing Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) to cover rental arrearages starting April 1, 2020, if they are eligible:
 - Household income is 80% AMI or less
 - Experiencing a risk of homelessness or housing instability (i.e., have rental arrears)
 - And have experienced either a loss of income or unusual expenses due, directly or indirectly, to the COVID crisis.
- SHERA does not cover utility arrearages or moving expenses, nor does it cover rental arrearages incurred prior to April 1, 2020; refer residents to ERAP administered by the Regional Administering Agencies (RAA) if they need these resources.
- If a resident has a pending application for RAFT/ERMA/ERAP, they **SHOULD NOT** apply for SHERA, but should allow the pending application to be processed. If a resident previously received RAFT/ERMA/ERAP, and still has unpaid rent due since April 1, 2020, they **SHOULD** participate.



OWNER & PROPERTY ELIGIBILITY DEEP DIVE





One of the following three conditions must be satisfied:

- 1 The owner has an existing borrower relationship with MassHousing or Massachusetts Housing Partnership AND their sponsor is in good standing with MassHousing and MHP; **OR**
- 2 Sponsor is a Public/Local Housing Authority; **OR**
- 3 The sponsor has at least one property subject to use restrictions due to participation in a state or federal program that has 20 or more rental housing units.

PLUS:

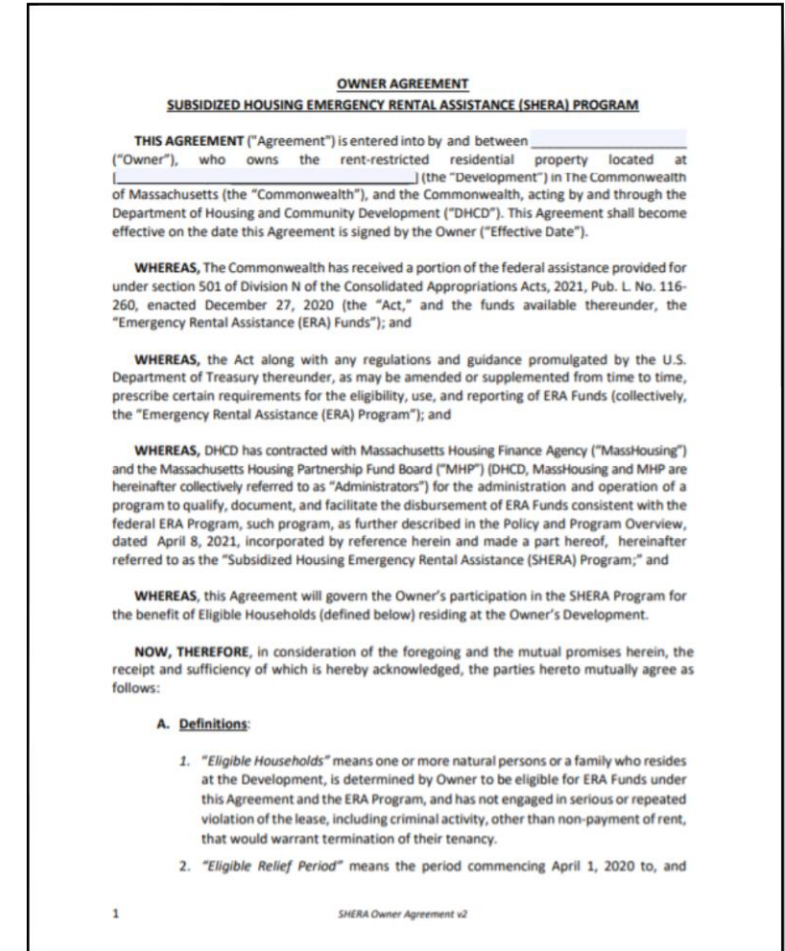
 In **good standing** and with appropriate **compliance experience**

OWNER ELIGIBILITY: CRITERIA 4 – OWNER OBLIGATIONS (1/3)



Owners participating in the program will be required to sign the [SHERA Owner Agreement](#) which outlines their responsibilities and commitments. Principal among these are the commitments to:

- ✓ Apply the benefit to the tenant account within 30 days of receipt of assistance payment;
- ✓ Suspend currently in-process evictions and not initiate new evictions for non-payment of rent against eligible households that received SHERA for at least 6 months after the last assistance payment is applied to a tenant's account;
- ✓ Reach out proactively to households who are behind in their rent;
- ✓ Engage proactively with residents in arrearage to create payment plans;



OWNER ELIGIBILITY: CRITERIA 4 – OWNER OBLIGATIONS (2/3)



Owners participating in the program will be required to sign the **SHERA Owner Agreement** which outlines their responsibilities and commitments. Principal among these are the commitments to:

- ✓ Promote program access to residents, support resident applications for rental assistance payments, and accept payments when made
- ✓ Provide downward rent adjustments for income-based rents, as applicable;
- ✓ Encourage structured and interactive pre-court mediation, including use of the state-funded no cost community mediation program
- ✓ Inform tenants when applications are submitted, when payments are received and applied, and if a payment is denied
- ✓ Instruct auditors to incorporate protocols into their 2021 property audits for review of SHERA funding applications and payments

OWNER ELIGIBILITY: CRITERIA 4 – OWNER OBLIGATIONS (3/3)



Owners participating in the program will be required to sign the **SHERA Owner Agreement** which outlines their responsibilities and commitments. Principal among these are the commitments to:

- ✓ Repay SHERA funds, if such payment is duplicative or out of compliance
- ✓ Obtain and retain required documentation on tenant eligibility
- ✓ Submit all required reports and requests through an online owner portal
- ✓ Certify with each submission that all information is correct and complete
- ✓ Be subject to compliance reviews

SHERA Non-Eviction Commitment



Property owners participating in the SHERA program agree to both **prevention** and **suspension** of evictions for non-payment of rent

1. Prevention: For **all** tenants, attempt a series of resolution steps, including repayment agreements and pre-court mediation, prior to filing a Summons and Complaint
2. Suspension: For tenants who have **received** SHERA, suspend evictions for a period of six months from the date of the last SHERA payment

Meaning of "suspending" an eviction

| Stage in eviction process | Action to suspend eviction |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Prior to Summons and Complaint | Do not issue Summons and Complaint |
| Summons and Complaint has been issued | Move to dismiss the case |
| Court event has been held | Move to dismiss the case |
| Court has issued judgment of eviction | Move to vacate the judgment |

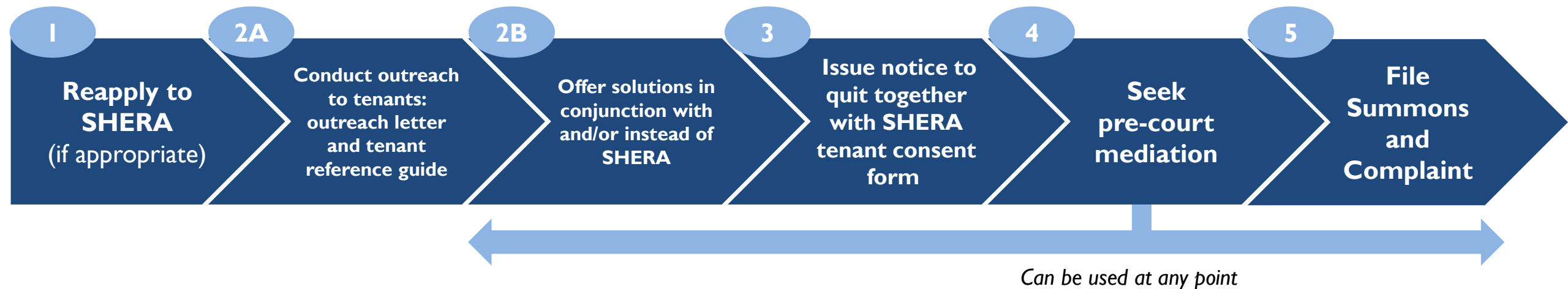
Examples of 6-month eviction suspension

| Last month of arrearage | Last SHERA payment for tenant | 6-month eviction suspension lasts until |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| June 2021 | July 1, 2021 | December 31, 2021 |
| September 2021 | October 1, 2021 | March 31, 2022 |



Resolution Steps for Non-Payment of Rent (All Households)

- As participants in the SHERA program, property owners are expected to attempt the resolution steps outlined below prior to filing a notice to quit (Step 3) or Summons and Complaint (Step 5) against any of their tenants for non-payment of rent. If resolution of the arrearage is achieved at any step, the sequence should not be continued.
- As a component of SHERA Owner Agreement compliance monitoring, DHCD may ask to review documentation demonstrating that owners pursued these resolution steps.





PROPERTY ELIGIBILITY





Eligible owners will be invited to submit applications for properties meeting the following criteria:

- 1 Eligible properties are income-restricted affordable rental housing properties, owned by eligible owners, that:
 - (a) received state or federal subsidies for construction and/or rehab of income-restricted housing, **OR**
 - (b) currently receive project-based rental assistance under contracts administered by the Commonwealth or other state public or quasi-public agencies.
- 2 Eligible properties must be subject to an annual audit.



HOUSEHOLD ELIGIBILITY





For a household to be eligible for assistance through SHERA, the following criteria must be met:



Rental arrears must be from the eligible **18-month** SHERA period starting on **April 1, 2020**



The household has experienced a **financial hardship due to COVID-19**



The owner can demonstrate the renter household has **eligible rental arrearages**



The household has income **at or below 80% Area Median Income (AMI)**



If a tenant is eligible for SHERA assistance, the property owner must collect the following required documentation:

Income Documentation

- Most recent income certification; or
- Documentation of benefits; or
- Documentation of income

Tenant Certification

- COVID-19 Impact
- Notify landlord if duplicative assistance received
- Permission for owner to apply on tenant behalf
- Owe rent due since April 2020

Other

- **Last four of SSN.** Tenants do not need a social security number to be eligible.
- **Demographic Data** required by the Treasury



Reapplications for Additional Assistance

- Owners may apply **multiple times** for a single tenant household, provided that the claims are for **different months of assistance**.
- Households that have **already signed a tenant certification** and have consented for the owner to apply to SHERA on their behalf **DO NOT** need to complete a new certification to receive assistance beyond the original April 1, 2020 – March 2021 SHERA eligibility period.
- Households may **OPT-OUT** of additional assistance. If an owner/agent intends on requesting additional assistance for households beyond March 2021, they **must first share an Opt-Out notice with the household of its intent to do so** (language provided). The household should have **at least five (5) days to respond** if it wishes to decline the additional assistance.



Owners notify tenant households on the application:

- Application has been submitted
- Requests for additional documents (if applicable)
- Application approval and payment to tenant account
 - The payment notice must specify the dollar amount of rental arrearages for which application has been made, the amount of reimbursement that the owner has received, and the months for which the payments have been applied to the tenant's account
- Re-application Notice



Owners who determine at the preapplication stage that a tenant is ineligible to apply for SHERA are expected to work with tenants who ask for a review of ineligibility determinations.

Notify the Tenant Immediately

The Owner must:

- Accept the tenant household's self-attestation of financial hardship due to COVID-19.
- Immediately notify the tenant of the reasons for ineligibility by sending a *SHERA Tenant Ineligibility Notice*. This notice will provide the tenant with the opportunity to ask the Owner for an administrative review, in writing, within 15 calendar days.

Conduct the Administrative Review

Once the Owner receives this request, the Owner must designate someone who did not make the initial determination to review all submitted documentation to determine whether the tenant is eligible for SHERA within 15 calendar days of receiving the request.

Communicate the Outcome

- If the Owner determines the tenant is eligible for SHERA, the Owner must apply on behalf of the tenant through the SHERA Portal; notify the tenant of the application submission; and continue with the SHERA claim process on behalf of the tenant.
- If the Owner confirms that the tenant is ineligible for SHERA, the Owner must notify the tenant of the decision. In the redetermination notice, the Owner must include BOTH:
 - A statement encouraging the tenant to notify the Owner of any changed circumstances in the future in case the tenant may then be eligible for SHERA
 - A listing of available rental assistance resources, including information on the no-cost community mediation program.



RESOURCES & SUPPORT





RESOURCES

- Review SHERA Program Reference Guides on the SHERA Website: [https://www.mass.gov/info-details/emergency-housing-payment-assistance-during-covid-19#details-on-the-subsidized-housing-emergency-rental-assistance-\(shera\)-program](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/emergency-housing-payment-assistance-during-covid-19#details-on-the-subsidized-housing-emergency-rental-assistance-(shera)-program)
- Review SHERA Training Webinars and Presentations on the EDI Training Portal: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/eviction-diversion-initiative-service-organization-trainings>



SUPPORT & QUESTIONS

- After reviewing the materials, if you have questions related to SHERA, please email shera@mass.gov.

Foreclosure and forbearance information for homeowners TOP Table of Contents

Details on the Subsidized Housing Emergency Rental Assistance (SHERA) Program

Subsidized Housing Emergency Rental Assistance (SHERA), is a federally-funded emergency rental assistance program which allows qualified Public / Local Housing Authorities and owners of affordable housing properties to apply online for Emergency Rental Assistance on behalf of multiple residents in a single application to expedite relief for residents.

Participating owners commit to divert evictions through industry best practices and a six-month protection against eviction for non-payment of rent for participating residents. These steps are essential in ensuring stable housing for residents affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

SHERA can cover the tenant's portion of unpaid rent for up to 18 months, beginning on or after April 1, 2020. For assistance with unpaid rent from other periods or with expenses such as overdue utility bills, renters are encouraged to apply for assistance directly through their local Regional Administering Agency (find your regional agency here: <https://hedfuel.azurewebsites.net/raa.aspx>).

The SHERA program requirements are available in more detail in the documents below. If you are a tenant and interested in learning whether the program can assist you, please contact your property manager.

- [SHERA Policy and Program Overview](#) (Includes Non-Eviction Commitment)
- [SHERA Tenant Overview Reference Guide](#)
- [SHERA Tenant Overview Reference Guide for LHAs](#)
- [SHERA Eligibility and Requirements Summary](#)
- [SHERA Owner Agreement](#)
- [SHERA Tenant Certification of Rental Assistance Eligibility](#)

RELATED

- [¿Se enfrenta al desalojo? Podemos ayudar. →](#)



QUESTIONS





THANK YOU!





Appendix

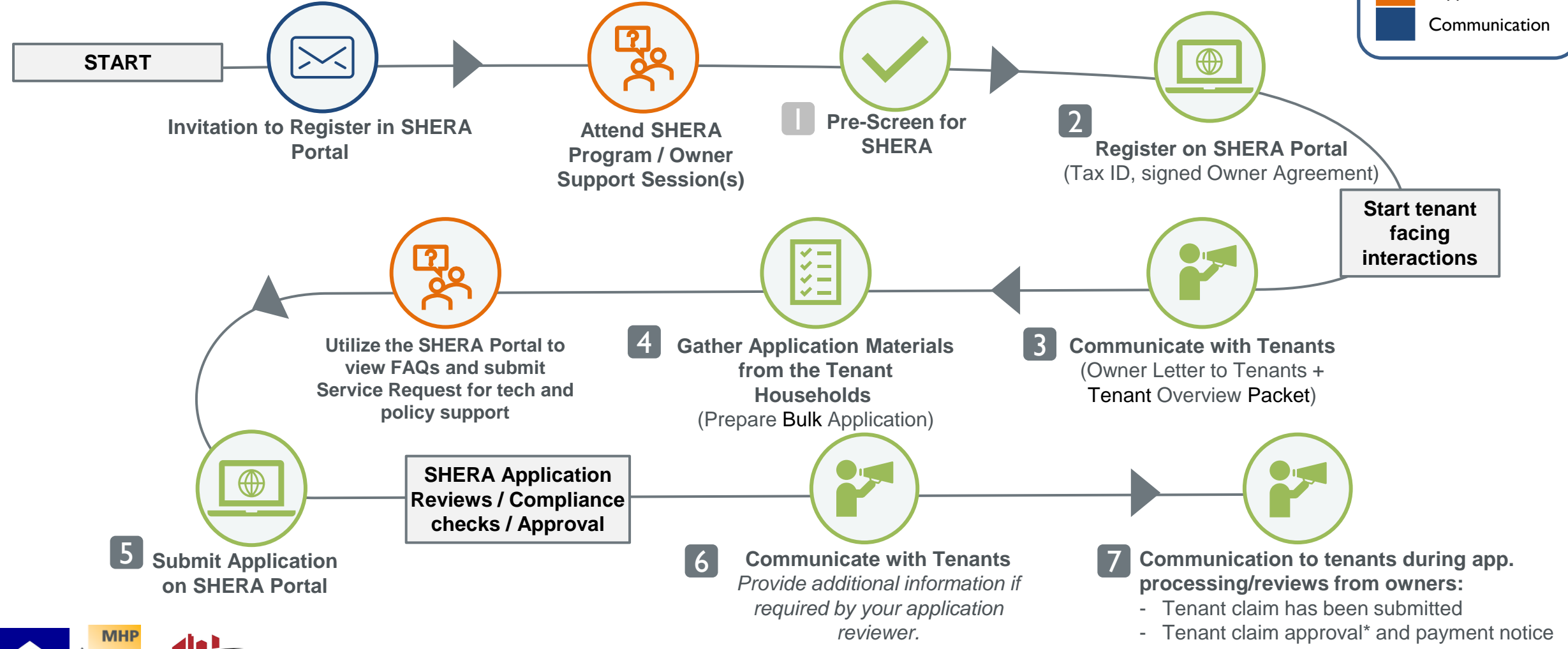


SHERA OWNER JOURNEY



■ Actions
■ Support
■ Communication

Owners can generally expect to follow this journey if they're participating in SHERA once they're eligible to register and apply. **Note:** Pre-screening is required to register for the SHERA program.



*Tenant claim denials will be communicated to owners and tenants by DHCD