Please note this document will be updated as information becomes available

Last Updated September 1, 2022

Residential Assistance for Families in Transition Program FY23 (RAFT) FAQ

REGIONAL ADMINISTERING AGENCIES
RAFT Program FAQs as of September 1, 2022

Eligibility

1. Are households in nursing homes or assisted living facilities able to receive RAFT for rent arrears?
   No, households in nursing homes and assisted living facilities cannot receive RAFT for rent arrears, as the charges include other services specific to the needs of residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. These charges are considered fees, not rent.

2. Do applicants need a secured unit before qualifying for move in costs?
   Applicants can still apply, but a secured unit is needed to receive assistance for the move. Any household using RAFT to move to new housing must provide proof of the new housing in the form of a lease, tenancy at will agreement, or other verification from the property owner.

Eligible Use of Funds

3. If a household receives a Notice to Quit for a balance related to property damages, can RAFT be used?
   Yes, if all other eligibility criteria is met, if the property owner is legally allowed to charge the tenant for the cost of the damages (such as if it is documented in the lease), and if the household received a Notice to Quit, then RAFT can be used for payments owed to the landlord for property damages.

Income Verification

4. If a household receives MassHealth or DTA benefits but their income exceeds 50% AMI, are they still eligible for RAFT?
   Yes, households that receive certain MassHealth and/or DTA benefits are presumed eligible for RAFT, regardless of their stated income on the application, which may not be precise.

Required Documentation

5. If a household is denied for not having received a Notice to Quit, but receives a Notice to Quit after the denial letter is issued, can the household be served with RAFT?
6. **Should households seeking rent arrears, who do not submit a Notice to Quit, be denied or timed out?**
   If the household indicates they have a Notice to Quit, but do not submit it, they should be timed out. If the household indicates they cannot submit a Notice to Quit because one was never issued to them, they should be denied for not having an eligible housing crisis.

**Subsidized Tenants**

7. **If a household's subsidy recertification happens less than annually, can that recertification documentation be accepted for presumed income eligibility?**
   No, the documentation must be dated within 12 months of the application.

8. **Does an applicant with an income-based subsidy have to provide proof of a financial hardship or “good cause” if they are receiving something other than rent arrears, such as utility arrears?**
   No, the “good cause” requirement is only for payment of rent arrears for households with income-based subsidies.

9. **Can households in tax credit units use their recertification for presumed income eligibility, like those with income-based subsidies can?**
   No, tenants in tax credit units cannot be presumed income eligible based on their recertification documents. However, if they are receiving DTA or MassHealth benefits, they can be presumed income eligible in that way.

**Other**

10. **If a LL/property owner is unwilling to participate in the RAFT program, what should the RAA do?**
    This might be a violation of Chapter 151B of the Massachusetts General Laws, which prohibits discrimination against a tenant receiving housing subsidies, including emergency rental assistance like RAFT. The DHCD Time Out Letter includes information about Chapter 151B and gives information on how a tenant can submit a fair housing complaint. In addition, RAAs may inform applicants about resources such as community mediation and legal services.

11. **What should RAAs do in instances where a RAFT payment was made, but the LL still moves to evict the applicant/tenant?**
The terms of agreement that the landlord receives states that the landlord cannot evict for amounts covered by the RAFT award, although they may do so in the future if rent isn’t paid. A referral to legal services is suggested if there is any suspicion that the landlord isn’t abiding by these terms.

12. The training documents said that to be considered valid for RAFT, a Notice to Quit had to include the reason for the termination, if for something other than nonpayment. What about Notices to Quit where there is no reason (“no cause” Notices)? Sometimes, a landlord may issue a Notice to Quit for no cause. In these cases, the RAA/RAP Center does not have to ensure that there is a reason on the Notice to Quit. The requirement of a reason for the termination will only apply to Notices to Quit for cause.