

Last Updated: November 8, 2021

Please note this document will be updated as more information is available to share.

Central Application FAQs

PUBLIC DOCUMENT



Contents

Central App Overview..... 2

Central App Processing.....5

Eligibility.....7

Central Application FAQs

Central App Overview

1. What is the central app? Do I need to know which specific program I am eligible for before applying?

The Central Application is a single online location where Massachusetts residents can apply for emergency housing assistance payments, including RAFT, ERMA, and ERAP, regardless of where they live in Massachusetts. The Central Application provides a single-entry point for Tenants, Landlords, Homeowners, and Advocates to apply for housing assistance. Regional Administering Agencies (RAAs) or the Rental Assistance Processing (RAP) Center will determine what program(s) the applicant is eligible for based on their submitted information and eligibility criteria.

2. How can I submit an application if I don't have a computer?

You can submit an application and documents using your smartphone. If you do not have access to a smartphone, computer or internet, you can also use a computer at your local library ([find yours here](#)) or your local Regional Administering Agency (RAA) ([find yours here](#)). Some community-based organizations can also sit with you and help you complete an application. If needed, an RAA can also provide you with a paper application.

3. What languages are the application available in?

The application is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Haitian Creole, Russian, and Khmer/Cambodian. Applicants select the preferred language tile on the Central App Portal before beginning the application. All other languages are available by selecting the language through the Google Translate tool at the top of the application page.

4. Can advocates submit applications?

Yes, advocates – including community-based organizations, family, and healthcare organizations – can submit on others' behalf. They will indicate that they are submitting on behalf of another person in the form when they are completing the application. Advocates will have a choice whether or not to continue communication on behalf of the applicant throughout the application process.

5. Can an applicant save their application and come back to it at another time?

No, there is not a "save and resume" function with the Central App. Applicants can continue working on the application prior to submission while the browser is open, and the internet connection is stable. Applicants will also have the ability to upload additional documents after initial submission.

6. What is the application ID?

Once an applicant submits an application, they will be sent an application ID that can be used to track and monitor their specific application, and to allow for the uploading of additional supporting documents needed to process the application.

7. Do landlords have their own application ID?

If the landlord applies directly on behalf of their tenant, they will receive the application ID directly via email after applying. Otherwise, the landlord will use the same application ID for the application as the tenant. The tenant will receive an email containing the application ID regardless of who submits the application initially. If the tenant provides the landlord's email the landlord will also receive an email containing the application ID.

8. How can an applicant retrieve their application ID?

Applicants can reference the original email that they received upon application submission. Additionally, applicants can contact the RAA by phone or email by accessing the information from the "Need Help" tile on the [Central App portal](#).

9. What documents are required to be submitted with the application?

The documents required to be submitted with the application may vary depending on the applicant's response to questions. The application will indicate with a red asterisk what documents will be required before submission is allowed. The full list of documents that may be required for the application to be processed can be found [here](#). Please note, an applicant can submit the application initially for consideration without all documents included, however, complete applications will be processed faster. Applicants can submit additional documentation through the application portal by using their unique application ID.

10. What happens if the applicant forgets to upload a document with their submission?

If an applicant file shows missing documentation, the RAA will contact the applicant with their application ID and a [link to the portal where they can upload](#) additional or new required documentation with their application. The applicant will select the "Upload Documents" tile. They will be asked to enter the application ID and their zip code to proceed with uploading the additional documentation.

11. How can an applicant get in contact with the Regional Administering Agency (RAA) after submission?

If an applicant would like to get in contact with the RAA after they apply, they can select the "Application Information" tile in the [Central App portal](#). Applicants will be asked to enter the application ID and their zip code, once entered, the name and contact information of the RAA that is processing the application will appear. Applicants can contact the RAA to ask for application support, clarification, status, or any general questions they may have.

12. What can an applicant do if they need help applying for housing assistance?

If an applicant needs help completing the application, they can [contact their local Regional Administering Agency \(RAA\)](#) for free assistance.

13. Are there any policy changes to the RAFT/ERMA/ERAP programs with the Central App?

No, there are no policy changes to the RAFT/ERMA/ERAP programs with the launch of the Central App. Any future policy changes will be communicated and incorporated into application questions if necessary.

14. How does the central application differ from the current RAA application(s) and process?

There is now one centralized application form maintained by DHCD instead of separate applications at each RAA. With significant input from RAAs, advocates, and low-income households, the new application asks generally the same questions but in a simpler manner for clients as well as RAA staff to process and review. Each RAA will no longer take applications through their own Cognito forms but will have applications routed to them from the central app.

15. Are my documents and personal information safe when I use the Central Application and Portal?

Yes, both the Central Application form and the Portal are secure and meet/exceed state IT security standards. You can feel confident uploading documents because:

- a. Your web browser will show a “lock” sign in the web address, which means the website is secure.
- b. The application is located at Mass.gov, the official website of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Central App Processing

16. Does an applicant have to specify whether they are covered by MassHealth or DTA benefits?

No, an applicant does not need to share this information. Participation in MassHealth or DTA will automatically be checked for anyone applying. If the applicant is found to be on MassHealth or DTA, then depending on the program they are ultimately served with, they may not need to provide any income documentation.

17. Who do we contact if an ID number is lost?

If an applicant loses their ID number, reach out to the local RAA in your region.

18. Is the app closed after 14 business days or calendar days? Is there an opportunity for the RAA to extend this if necessary?

Before closing out an application, the regional administering agency (RAA) must give the applicant or landlord a warning that the application will be closed out in

10 business days if documentation is not received. After those 10 business days (usually 14 calendar days), the RAA will send a “RAFT/ERMA/ERAP Status Notification”. The notification explains that an applicant or landlord then have 14 days to reopen the application by submitting the missing documentation.

19. Are agencies providing benefit letters if requested?

Yes.

20. If the advocate, not the tenant, is submitting the application on behalf of tenant does the applicant also receive an email confirming submission with ID number?

Yes, both parties will receive the information.

21. Does a zero income statement form need to be provided?

No statement needs to be provided; if the applicant has zero income then select "No Income" and that will suffice.

22. Does the advocate sign their name or the client's?

An advocate should sign their name on behalf of the client as long as the advocate has checked off the consent box to complete the app on tenant's behalf.

23. Do applicants need to provide a direct deposit authorization form when they submit an application, or will the RAA reach out to them?

If the applicant has a Direct Deposit authorization form at the time of submission, they should include it in their application. If not, the RAA will reach out to obtain once an award is determined.

24. If a client is currently in the eviction process with a court date will their application be processed faster and if so what documentation should be submitted with the application?

The best way to ensure an application is processed quickly is to submit a complete application. If someone has a court date, their court summons should be uploaded as proof of their housing crisis/reason for applying in the application.

25. Is DTA/MassHealth verification run for the entire household or just the head of household?

The DTA/MH check is run for all household members. If any member of the household is found to be a participant in DTA/MH programs, then the household will be presumed income eligible for ERAP.

Eligibility

26. Is the new central application only for current renters or does the central application also apply for prospective renters?

The central application is for anyone seeking assistance who has an eligible housing crisis. If someone is moving due to a housing emergency (like being doubled-up or having a health or safety crisis) they may be eligible for funds and can apply through the Central App.

27. Can households without rent arrears apply for ongoing stipend payments only?

Yes, households without rent arrears can apply for stipend payments under certain conditions. If the household is not paying 30% or more of their income toward rent, the household is not automatically considered to demonstrate an “inability to pay future market rent,” but may still qualify if they provide a reasonable explanation verifying their inability to pay future market rent. Examples may include: unforeseen household or medical emergency, increase in expenses, or heavy monthly debt burden. At this time, Households do not need to provide documentation to verify this explanation, but they do need to provide a reasonable explanation that could be supported by documentation if requested.

28. Do you have to have a social security number to apply?

No, a social security number is not required to apply. However, if available it is helpful to include to verify participation in MassHealth, etc.

29. How do tenants know how many months of ERAP funds they were approved for and how many they have left?

This information is in the award letter that is sent to the landlord and tenant upon approval.

30. If client is in a roommate situation should we prorate the rental amount? How should we enter this information in the application?

Advocates should enter the actual amount that the applicant and any people on their application are responsible for. If a applicant is only responsible for 50% of the rent because a roommate pays the other 50%, and the applicant is applying as a single applicant without the roommate, then the rent amount listed should be the actual amount the applicant is responsible for (in this case, 50% of the rent).

31. If tenants received assistance already, can they reapply?

If eligible (tenant has not been awarded maximum benefit of 18 months of assistance) tenants can complete the recertification application for future stipends (up to 3 months at a time). Applicants will be sent a link if they are eligible to recertify.