Central Application

Community Based Organization Training

Monday, December 6, 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.
WELCOME
Our Journey
Today
75 MINUTES

- **Welcome**
  - 5 mins
- **Central App Overview**
  - 50 mins
- **Demo**
  - 50 mins
- **Portal Navigation**
  - 20 mins
- **Questions & Answers**
  - 20 mins
Review details of the **Central Application** & High-Level Process Changes

Learn how the **Central Application Portal** can be used

Provide a forum to ask questions so you are prepared to use the Central App
$402.7M
Total Amount of Funds Distributed

FUNDS DISTRIBUTED

8,656 households were assisted with $40.3M of ERAP (formerly paid by RAFT) prior to official ERAP launch date.

Total Amount of Funds Distributed by Month

Data source: Self-reported by individual RRAIs | Data range: 11/23/2020 - 11/25/2021 | Last updated: 11/30/2021

1. The “Households Served by Month” view displays the number of unique households served within each month. There may be duplicate households across months if they receive multiple payments.
2. Funds Distributed is calculated only with direct assistance to households and does not include administration fees.
3. 8,656 households were assisted with $40.3M of ERAP (formerly paid by RAFT) prior to official ERAP launch date.
ERAP Good News Highlights (2 of 2)

53,450
Total # of Unique Households Served

HOUSEHOLDS SERVED

Total Unique Households Served by Month

- RAFT
- ERMA
- ERAP
- SHERA

*6,026 households were assisted with $40.3M of ERAP (formerly paid by RAFT) prior to official ERAP launch date.

1) The “Households Served by Month” view displays the number of unique households served within each month. There may be duplicate households across months if they receive multiple payments.
2) Funds Distributed is calculated only with direct assistance to households and does not include administration fees.
3) 6,026 households were assisted with $40.3M of ERAP (formerly paid by RAFT) prior to official ERAP launch date.

Data source: Self-reported by individual RAAs
Data range: 11/23/2020 - 11/29/2021
Last updated: 11/30/2021
CENTRAL APP OVERVIEW
The Central App is a single online location where Massachusetts residents can apply for rental assistance benefits regardless of where they live in the state.

It is a single-entry point for Landlords, Tenants, and Advocates to apply for ERAP and RAFT.
WHY A CENTRAL APP?

Central App Benefits

Now one, single statewide application

Single set of questions paired with Accessibility updates across Commonwealth; easier to change

Additional documents can be easily uploaded through a single and secure statewide portal

DHCD has direct insight into applications received (& demographics), and can easily confirm which RAA is processing a given application

More stable and secure application structure with data redundancies
The are 10-12 sections which should take around 20-30 minutes to complete.

While there is no save and resume functionality, the application will not time out as long as the browser remains open, and the internet connection is stable.

The application will require some documents to be uploaded prior to submission (indicated with a red asterisk). Additional documentation may be uploaded in the portal after submission if not already submitted with application.
Under the current Central App, applicants **CAN**:

- Submit an application with *only* the ID (renters)
- Take **hours** to complete application (as long as internet connected/browser open)
- **Submit additional documents**, like a lease, via the Portal after submitting the application
- Email/call the **RAA** to make changes to the application (i.e., add a household member)

After submitting, applicants **CANNOT**:

- **Directly edit** the original application (instead, must contact RAA for changes)
- **Share** a copy of the application with an advocate for pre-review
CENTRAL APPLICATION JOURNEY

Start Central App Process

Key
- Applicant
- RAA
- Advocate

Application Reviewed (if additional documents needed, RAA reaches out)

Approval Sent

Note: This is not an exhaustive list of activities

RAA or RAP Center receives application and documentation

Advocate supports tenant to complete application (Advocate app)

Advocate explains requirements for applications (e.g., required documents)

Applicant provides advocate with documents

Applicant contacts CBO/Advocate needing Housing Assistance
Complete the following advocate fields:

- Advocate First Name: _____________
- Advocate Last Name: _____________
- Advocate Phone: _______________
- Advocate Email_____________
- Advocate Org: _______________

Advocate Consent Confirmation

- Check the box “Please check this box to confirm you have consent to submit this application on behalf of the applicant”
- If you click this box: “Please check this box to confirm you have consent to communicate regarding this application on behalf of the applicant” then the advocate will receive all communications from the RAA

Advocates submitting application on behalf of an applicant can electronically sign on the applicant's behalf
DHCD revised the COVID impact question in the Central App to allow all applicants (who are otherwise eligible) to indicate they have had COVID impact.
Applicants and RAA staff will have access to a central portal. Applicants will be able to upload additional documentation using this portal if needed.

**Applicant Portal**

**WELCOME TO THE MASSACHUSETTS EMERGENCY HOUSING PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PORTAL**

Use this portal to upload additional documents and see which RAA is processing your application.

**Available Services**

- Upload Documents
  - Forgot to include any documents with your application? Upload them here!
- Application Information
  - See which RAA is processing your application
- Need Help?

**Cognito Application**

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE APPLICATION**

The Emergency Housing Payment Assistance application is free. No fee is required to apply, and free help is available to complete applications. Beware of scams by people charging an “application fee” to help submit an application. If you need help completing the application, contact your local RAA for free assistance.

This application for rental assistance will take 20-30 minutes. Please complete it in one sitting; you will not be able to save and return to it. Be honest – if you give inaccurate or incomplete information, your application may be delayed or denied.

The application will ask you:

- About your current housing, and what challenges you may be facing
- For the names, dates of birth, and social security numbers of everyone in your household. You don’t have to include a social security number if you don’t have one.
- How much money everyone in your household makes.
- What kind of assistance you need
- For your landlord’s contact information
- For signatures from all adults in your household

You will also have to submit the following documentation. Your application will be processed faster if you include all of these documents.

- ID for the head of household
- Proof of housing crisis (for example an eviction notice or letter saying you’re behind on rent)
- Proof of housing (for example a lease)
- Proof of income (for example paycheck)

Click here to learn more about equal opportunity.

After you submit the application, a case manager from a Regional Administering Agency (RAA) will contact you. Please respond quickly when they do.
LANDLORD APPLICATIONS

• Landlords may use the Central App to apply on behalf of their tenant(s)

• The 20 unit maximum for using the landlord door has been lifted; there is no unit cap
  – Owners/operators of subsidized and public housing may continue to use the SHERA program

• Landlords must include a consent form signed by the tenant
APPLICATION DOCUMENTS
An application that is fully complete, with all required documentation, will be processed faster.

Incomplete applications will be closed if documentation is not provided within 14 days of notification of missing documents.

Please ensure applicants have all documentation needed to apply.

Advocates are encouraged to complete online applications as much as possible as they will be processed faster (paper apps need to be keyed in by RAA staff before they can be processed).
In order to apply to the Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), renters will need to provide the following required documents:

### I.D. FOR HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD
- This document will need to include the head of household's full name and date of birth. Examples include a state issued driver's license, birth certificate, or passport.

### PROOF OF CURRENT HOUSING
- This includes a lease, tenancy agreement or a tenancy at-will form

### VERIFICATION OF HOUSING CRISIS
- Notice of arrears or balance overdue (ledger)
- Court summons
- Notice to quit
- Notice of eviction
- Letter from host if doubled up

### VERIFICATION OF INCOME

1. **Presumed eligibility:** Households receiving benefits from the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) or most MassHealth plans are presumed eligible. **IF NOT, THEN…**

2. **Benefit Letters:** Households can provide an income eligibility form from one of the following benefit programs:
   - Public housing (state or federal)
   - Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8)
   - State housing vouchers: MRVP, AHVP, DMH, or DDS housing vouchers
   - LIHEAP
   - Massachusetts subsidized childcare
   - Veterans Chapter 115 benefits

3. **Self-Submitted Documents:**
   - Annual income may be verified by 2020 Form 1040 (s); OR
   - Monthly income may be verified by two paystubs from the past 60 days, plus most recent benefit letters (social security, child support, unemployment, etc.)

### REQUIRED LANDLORD FOLLOW-UP
- The tenant's landlord will need to provide a W-9 and proof of ownership before the application is approved.
- **PLEASE Request the Landlord/Owner email (preferred) and/or phone number**
Scenario:
My name is Alex Sullivan. I live in an apartment in Fall River with my wife and our two children, who are both under 18. We have been renting this apartment for 4 years now.

I am applying for emergency housing assistance because of a financial hardship due to COVID-19--during the pandemic, my wife reduced her hours to take on childcare while schools were closed, I lost my job and am receiving unemployment. We can’t afford our rent on her salary alone.
SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION AND NEXT STEPS
New applicants will be notified by email, phone, or mail at the following status changes.

**Application Submitted**

Applicants will receive an application submission receipt (emailed) that includes the Application ID to track the application moving forward.

**Missing Documentation**

Applicants will be notified if there is any missing documentation. This communication will be from their Regional Administering Agency.

**Close-Out or Denial**

Applicants will be notified if they are:

- **Denied**: Applicant is ineligible.
- **Closed-Out**: Missing documentation (tenant or landlord), unresponsiveness leading to incomplete application.

**Approval**

If an applicant is approved, they will be notified of approval and will be sent a copy of the landlord terms of agreement to participate.

NOTE: Applicants can submit missing documentation through the Central Application Portal.
Once an application has been submitted, the applicant is responsible for future communication unless you selected the box where you are communicating on their behalf.

Applicants will receive an email within 10-15 minutes with their application ID and the name of which RAA is processing their application. Applicants can use their zip code or date of birth and Application ID in the online portal to check which RAA is processing their application.

RAAs may communicate with applicants by phone if they provide a contact number and indicate a preference.

If an applicant does not have an email, you should ask if someone in their household has an active email account, they can use to receive communication regarding their application. As an advocate, you can choose to receive communication on behalf of the applicant.
APPLICATION REMINDERS

When completing the application be sure to keep in mind the following:

✓ Capture the landlord email or phone number for future RAA communication
✓ Encourage applicants to keep a record of their application ID for status updates and access within the portal
If needed, applicants will be able to upload additional documentation using this portal. The Application ID is required to upload documents.
PORTAL
EMERGENCY HOUSING PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PORTAL

Upload Documents
Allows applicants and property owners to upload new or missing documentation necessary as part of the application and eligibility verification

Application Information
Allows applicants to see which agency is processing their application

Need Help?
Applicants have access to the contact information to answer questions or receive assistance
Applicants and Property Owners will use the portal to upload any additional documentation. The documentation can be a photo or PDF file.

Note: The Application ID is required to upload documents to the portal.
Applicants and Property Owners will use the “Application Information” tile to identify which RAA has their application. Applicants and Property owners will need to input their Application ID and Zip Code or Date of Birth.
Applicants and Property Owners can use the “Need Help?” tile to access contact information for the RAA that is supporting your city.
QUESTIONS
RESOURCES
APPLY NOW SITE

- Link to the Central Application
- Required Documentation List
- Quick Eligibility Checker
- AMI Calculator
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Step by Step Application and Portal Instructions
- Additional Resources

Link: www.mass.gov/covidhousinghelp
**RESOURCES**

1. **DHCD Website**
   Visit the DHCD Rental Assistance Website for more information on ERAP

2. **EDI Portal**
   Central resource to provide partners with key updates, FAQs, training materials and helpful info. **Meeting Materials**, included a recording of this session will be shared and uploaded.

3. **Public Information Campaign Portal**
   Includes promotional materials, and summary of how to submit an application

4. **Community Mediation**
   Local non-profits are available to help landlords and tenants resolve disputes. [https://www.resolutionma.org/housing](https://www.resolutionma.org/housing)

5. **COVID Eviction Legal Help Project**
   Visit [https://evictionlegalhelp.org/](https://evictionlegalhelp.org/) to search for free or low-cost legal help

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1. **Central Application User Guide**
2. **Central Application Portal Guide**
3. **Central Application FAQ**
THANK YOU!