

OREGON EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



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Oregon Emergency Rental Assistance Program Open for Applications

Oregon Housing and Community Services will distribute \$204 million to qualified renters who have experienced financial hardship due to the coronavirus pandemic and are at risk of homelessness or housing instability

SALEM, OR – Starting on Wednesday, May 19th, qualified renters may begin submitting applications to the Oregon Emergency Rental Assistance Program (OERAP) for funding to pay rent, rent arrears, future rent and certain home utility costs.

“For the first time, renters can access rental assistance through a statewide, centralized application portal,” says Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) Executive Director Margaret Salazar. “Together with our community-based partners, we are prioritizing resources toward our most vulnerable households to help keep Oregonians in their homes during these challenging times.”

OHCS is coordinating with OERAP local administrators—17 community action agencies and one public housing authority—across the state to emphasize an equitable approach in the processing of applications and distribution of funds. This coordinated partnership helps ensure OERAP makes the greatest impact on reducing housing instability and homelessness.

Every renter that applies will have their application reviewed, and relief resources will be distributed to those who meet the following federal eligibility requirements:

- have income less than 80% of Area Median Income (AMI);
- have an individual in the household who has qualified for unemployment benefits or experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant costs, or experienced other financial hardship due to the coronavirus pandemic;
- demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability due to past-due rent or utilities.

Federal guidance requires that grantees prioritize households with incomes less than 50% AMI and households with one or more members that have been unemployed for at least 90 days.

OHCS is using four factors in addition to these two, including: household size, months behind on rent, 2020 wildfire impact, and if the household lives within a census tract identified by the nationally recognized [Urban Institute Rental Assistance Priority Index](#) as a census tract with a high prevalence of low income renters at risk of experiencing housing instability and homelessness due to COVID. A “first come, first served” model can unintentionally leave out renters most at risk of housing instability or homelessness and those who face barriers in applying for assistance, such as limited internet access or language barriers. With that in mind, the agency established a system to prioritize the highest needs households.

“The public health emergency underscores for all of us the critical importance that a safe, stable, affordable home free of discrimination plays to our health and well-being,” said Andrea Bell, Director of Housing Stabilization at OHCS. “I’m grateful we and our many community partners have taken intentional steps to direct resources towards intentionally investing in eviction prevention and long-term stability to help relieve some of the financial burden Oregonians have faced during this pandemic.”

OHCS received approximately \$204 million in federal funds for this program. The City of Portland, and the counties of Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, Lane and Marion received additional federal Emergency Rental Assistance allocations that total approximately \$76 million and opted to accept applications from residents through their own application process. Applicants are prohibited from accepting payment from the same expense from different providers and are asked to select one program. All Oregonians are welcome to apply to OERAP. Tribal governments also received allocations directly from US Treasury. OHCS is partnering with the Oregon Human Development Corporation (OHDC) to provide additional assistance to Spanish speaking applicants.

“The pandemic’s economic fallout has disproportionately impacted vulnerable communities. We see that each day with struggling farmworkers and many of the underserved communities we work with,” said Martin Campos-Davis, Executive Director of the Oregon Human Development Corporation. “These resources will be available to all regardless of immigration status. I encourage families struggling with rent and utility bills who need assistance in Spanish to reach out to us. Help is available.”

Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis until 2022 or until program funds run out. In most cases, payment will be made directly to the landlord or utility provider. To find out additional information about criteria or to apply to the OERAP program visit OregonRentalAssistance.org. Oregonians in need of assistance can contact their local Community Action Agency or local program administrator or contact <http://211info.org> or call 2-1-1.

Please note: The application portal is not yet open to residents of Clackamas County. Oregonians in that community can contact Clackamas County's Coordinated Housing Access line for more information about rental and utility resources available: (503) 655-8575 or visit their webpage at www.clackamas.us/communitydevelopment/cha.

Review the recent Oregon Emergency Rental Assistance Program media briefing here: <http://bit.ly/OERAPbriefing>

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