

“Amended Attachment A”  
Lancaster County, PA  
Emergency Rental Assistance Program  
and  
General Program Guidelines

## Introduction

The Lancaster County Rental Assistance Program is being established to provide rental and utility payments to landlords and utility companies in order to keep residents housed during the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure rental housing stability.

Funding is being provided by the U.S. Department of Treasury directly to the County and through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania through the Department of Human Services. An initial award of \$16,260,899 has been received from the U.S. Department of Treasury for the use of rent and utility assistance for eligible households within the County. The County received an allocation of 19,631,534.12 in additional funds from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, through the Department of Human Services, for the Rental and Utility Assistance Grant program component of Act 1 of 2021 (together referred to as ERA1 funding).

Through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the County will receive \$12,866,488.30 in additional funds directly from the U.S. Department of Treasury for the use of rent and utility assistance for eligible households within the County (referred to as ERA2 funding). The eligibility requirements are very similar, and these funds will be implemented consistently with ERA1 funding to reduce applicant and administrative burdens.

The Lancaster County Housing Authority will administer the Program for the County and will be staffed by the Lancaster County Redevelopment Authority along with city and county agencies and non-profit providers including Tabor/LHOP, Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Lancaster City Housing Authority.

The Program Guidelines and Program Overview have been developed through a collaborative effort between the County of Lancaster, Lancaster County Housing Authority, Lancaster County Redevelopment Authority, City of Lancaster, Lancaster City Housing Authority, Coalition to End Homelessness (LancCo MyHome), Tabor Community Services/Lancaster Housing Opportunity Partnership, and Community Action Partnership of Lancaster. Additional services and support are provided through 2-1-1, the Eviction Prevention Network, and countywide organizations and school districts.

The Program Guidelines and Overview are subject to additional guidance from the U.S. Department of Treasury and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (through the Department of Human Services), and the Lancaster County Emergency Rental Assistance Program may be updated to reflect the guidance.

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## Program Guidelines

### Eligible Assistance

Not less than 90 percent of the funds shall be used to provide financial assistance to eligible households (<80% AMI).

- Eligible households may receive up to twelve (12) months of assistance through ERA1 funding
  - An additional three (3) months of assistance may be provided if it is determined that extra months are critical to ensuring housing stability for the household.
- Eligible households that have received the maximum amount of assistance through ERA1 funding, and eligible households that meet the criteria for ERA2 funding, will be required to enroll in case management services to review the applicant’s (household’s) housing stability.
  - This will include connecting the household to other programs and services for employment, legal assistance, food security, childcare, and other related assistance.
- The payment of existing housing-related arrears that could result in eviction of an eligible household is prioritized.
- Assistance will be provided to reduce an eligible household’s rental arrears before the household may receive assistance for future rent payments.
- Once a household’s arrears are reduced, assistance for future rent payments will be provided for up to three (3) months.
  - Households may reapply for additional assistance at the end of the three (3) months and receive such assistance if:
    - Eligibility is re-determined including review of the household’s income; and
    - The assistance does not exceed the overall eighteen (18)-month period between ERA1 and ERA2 combined.

### Rent Assistance

- Rent including rental arrears.
- Eligible assistance with rent arrears as far back as March 13, 2020, (assuming no other financial assistance has been provided for the same months).
- Maximum monthly rent payments may include rent, late fees or penalties due to nonpayment, pet fees, and utilities covered by the landlord.
- Maximum monthly rent will be established at time of initial application submission and review of the tenant’s lease agreement (written or 3<sup>rd</sup> party verified documentation showing residency and past payments).
  - Written signed and current lease; or
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> party documentation showing tenant residency, landlord ownership and payments of rent.
  - Without documentation and written attestation, maximum monthly rent will be capped at 100 percent of the Fair Market Rent

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**Utilities and Home Energy Costs Assistance**

- Utilities and home energy costs including arrears, with or without the need for rent assistance.
  - Utilities are defined as separately-stated electricity, gas, water and sewer, and trash removal costs.
  - Home energy costs are defined as fuel oil (propane gas, heating oil).
- Telecommunication services such as telephone and cable are not considered to be utilities.
  - Internet expenses will not be covered by Lancaster County’s program.

**Other Expenses Related to Housing**

- Other expenses related to housing incurred due, directly or indirectly, to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, as defined by the Secretary.
  - Eviction court fees and legal representation for non-payment of rent and utilities only
    - Eligible households will provide a bill, invoice, or evidence of payment
  - Security deposits, first month’s rent to ensure eligible households’ stability due to permanent or temporary relocation due to COVID-19.
    - Eligible households will provide notice of non-renewal of current lease, or other evidence of notice to temporarily relocate due to COVID-19

## Eligible Households

Household individual or individuals **meet the following three (3) program criteria:**

**Criteria 1: Meets and can provide documentation of one of the following:**

- Qualified for unemployment benefits; or
- Experienced a 10 percent or higher reduction in household income; or
- Incurred significant costs, or experienced other financial hardship due, directly to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID–19) outbreak,

**Criteria 2: Meets and can provide documentation of the following:**

- Demonstrated risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability, which may include:
  - A past due utility; or
  - A past due rent notice; or
  - An eviction notice since March 13, 2020; or
  - Unsafe or unhealthy living conditions

**Criteria 3: Meets and can provide documentation of 80 percent area median income:**

- Household has a household income that is not more than 80 percent of the county area median income for the household. Current area median income is based off Program Year 2021.  
<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il/il2021/2021summary.odn>
- Acceptable documentation of household income:

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- Annual income for Year 2020
  - HUD definition of annual income through W-2’s or wage statements, paystubs, bank statements demonstrating regular income or attestation from employer.
  - 2020 Form 1040 as filed with the IRS
- Monthly income
  - Documentation of income provided at time of application will be extrapolated over a twelve (12) month period, and redetermined every three month during the duration of assistance.

## Ineligible Households

Other than households who do not meet the criteria listed in the above section, the following are examples of ineligible households:

- Households requesting assistance for rent and utility costs and have already received federal, state, and/or local assistance for the same costs.

## Payments

In general, funds will be paid directly to landlords, utility service providers, and home energy suppliers.

If a landlord or utility provider does not provide required documentation to accept payments on behalf of eligible households, and upon a reasonable effort to contact the landlord or utility provider, funds shall be paid directly to the eligible household if:

- Landlords and utility providers have not responded after notification in writing by mail and seven (7) calendar days have passed; or
- Landlords and utility providers have not responded after at least three (3) attempts by phone, text, or email during a minimum five (5) day period; or
- Landlords and utility providers confirm in writing that they do not wish to participate.

## Prioritization of Eligible Households and Assistance

### Households (In Priority Order)

1. Households at or below 50 percent of the area median income (AMI).
  - Households with a scheduled eviction hearing or “Notice to Quit” letter from the landlord.
  - Households with a utility shut off notice.
  - Households with late rent and/or utility and home energy bills.
2. Households with an individual or individuals who have been unemployed as of the date of the application for assistance for the ninety (90) day period preceding such date.

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- Households with a scheduled eviction hearing or “Notice to Quit” letter from the landlord.
- Households with a utility shut off notice.
- Households with late rent and/or utility and home energy bills.

**Assistance (In Priority Order)**

1. Rental and utility arrears
2. Rent and utilities for up to three (3) months
3. Other expenses related to housing
4. Rent and utilities for up to six (6) additional months after twelve (12) months of initial assistance through ERA1 and ERA2 funding.

## Program Overview

## Application Process

**Program Start Date:** March 8, 2021

**Program End Date:** September 30, 2022 unless otherwise extended.

**Obtain Application:** Directly through [www.lancasterhelp.rent](http://www.lancasterhelp.rent) or with assistance from county and city organizations with support staff and computer access. Call 2-1-1 or helpline for information on how to apply.

**Application Submission (Pre-Screening):** Tenants (applicant) will apply online at [www.lancasterhelp.rent](http://www.lancasterhelp.rent).

- An applicant will establish an account with username (email address) and password.
- Landlords can assist applicants with online submission of application.
- Online application is available in numerous languages through Google Translate feature.
- Software will check for duplicate household applications.
- Applicants can save progress and exit application and submit another time.
- Applicants will provide basic information about the household, income, and answer questions to determine initial eligibility for rent and/or utility assistance.

**Application Prioritizing:** Upon submission of all required documentation and completion of eligibility determination, landlord and utility provider outreach and payment approvals will be prioritized on a bi-weekly basis to meet the federal and local prioritization as established in the Program Guidelines. The application submission is not a first-come, first-serve or lottery-based process.

**Applicant Eligibility-Screening and Document Review:** Using the same account credentials, an applicant can log onto [www.assistancecheck.com](http://www.assistancecheck.com) to update contact information, submit required documentation

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and check the status of their initial submission. Applicants will have access to the web portal the day following the date that a submitted application is received through Waitlistcheck, except on weekends, and access will be available the next business day.

Applicants will download, fill out and upload documents to assist in eligibility determination including:

- Pennsylvania Labor & Industry Pandemic UI Assistance Letter
- Pennsylvania Labor & Industry Notice of Financial Determination Letter
- W-2s and paystubs of income earned
- Bank statements of employer direct deposits
- Attestation of unemployment, reduction of income and significant costs and financial hardship
- 2020 1040 IRS tax filing
- Employer Income Form – completed and certified by tenant applicant’s employer
- Tenant Duplication of Benefits Certification Form
- Tenant’s “lease agreement” (e.g., for a house, mobile home, apartment, room rental)
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> party documentation showing tenant residency, landlord ownership and payments of rent.
- Tenant’s eviction notice and/or late payment notice(s)
- Tenant’s utility bill(s) and late fees(s)
- Case managers will review information and documents submitted through the online application and applicant access websites.
- Case managers will have access to records to cross-reference other federal, state, and local assistance programs to verify no duplication of services for the same rent and utility costs being requested through this Program.
- Case managers will complete eligibility determination. Payment requests will be initiated for eligible applicants. Denials will be sent to any applicant that does not qualify.

**Application Recertification Form (Additional Months of Assistance Requests):** Applicants will be required to fill out an ***Application Recertification Form and Documentation of Current Monthly Income*** for additional months of assistance. Applicants who were income qualified by 2020 1040 IRS tax filing will only have to complete the Application Recertification Form. Applicants can request three months at a time and an Application Recertification Form will be required for each request of additional assistance, for a maximum of eighteen (18) months of assistance between ERA1 funding and ERA2 funding.

**Case Management Requirement (ERA2 funding):** Applicants who are requesting rent and utility assistance and are determined to be eligible per ERA2 funding guidelines will be required to enroll in case management services to review the applicant’s (household’s) housing stability. This will include connecting the household to other programs and services for employment, legal assistance, food security, childcare, health, and other related assistance. Applicants will be required to sign a form that

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they acknowledge the case management services requirement as a condition to receive the ERA2 funding.

This requirement applies to applicants who:

- Are requesting three (3) to six (6) months of additional rent and utility assistance after meeting the twelve (12) to fifteen (15) months of maximum assistance with ERA1 funding.
- Have indicated that a member of the household was unemployed, or had reduction of income or financial hardship **during** the pandemic, but did not indicate it was due directly or indirectly to COVID-19.

**Landlord and Utility Provider Outreach and Review of Assistance:** In general, funds will be paid directly to landlords and utility service providers and home energy suppliers.

- Landlord/utility specialist will obtain information from the landlord or utility provider to verify rent, utilities and home energy and verify balances owed due to arrears within the eligible period of assistance.
  - Landlords and utility providers will be contacted by written notification through mail and will have seven (7) calendar days to respond, or
  - Landlords and utility providers will be contacted at least three (3) times by phone, text, or email during a five (5) day period, or
  - Landlords and utility providers may provide in writing that they wish not to directly participate in the program.
- Landlords will fill out and/or upload documents to verify arrear balances, W-9 form, and voided checks necessary for providing payment.

**Online Information for Landlords:** [www.lchra.com/landlord/](http://www.lchra.com/landlord/)

- Review Payments for units/tenants within the Program

## Dedicated Helpline (717) 590-3101

The helpline will assist applicants, landlords, and utility companies with questions about the program and how to get computer access and assistance in providing necessary documentation for eligibility.

- Refer applicants to locations with staff support and computer access.
- Refer applicants to website.
- Inform tenants of eligibility requirements and informal screening of eligibility.
- Inform tenants and landlords on submission of documents for eligibility and payments.
- Inform tenants, landlords and utility companies on how to obtain status and payment updates.

## Computer Access and Application Assistance

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Along with a dedicated helpline, since the Program is an online computerized based platform, there will be locations throughout the County and City for residents with limited computer knowledge or limited or no computer access. With the help of the Eviction Prevention Network, state representative offices, school districts and other partnering organizations and groups, the Program will be able to provide additional assistance for applicants needing help to apply, gain computer access, or scan and upload necessary documentation.

Applicants can call 2-1-1, the helpline or directly to the location for hours and scheduling an appointment.

Location Information will be updated on [www.lancasterhelp.rent](http://www.lancasterhelp.rent).

Details about Locations (More may be added):

**Brightside Opportunity Center**

515 Hershey Avenue, Lancaster, PA 17603

Bilingual staff available to assist

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8am-6pm

To contact: 717-509-1342

**Price Elementary**

615 Fairview Avenue, Lancaster, PA 17603

Bilingual staff available to assist by appointment

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:30am-4pm. Evening hours by appointment

To contact: 717-291-6252

**Tabor/LHOP**

308 E. King Street, Lancaster, PA 17602

Bilingual staff able to assist

Hours: By appointment

To contact: 717-291-9945 ext. 194 or [brivera@lhop.org](mailto:brivera@lhop.org)

**SoWe**

417 Poplar Street, Lancaster, PA 17603

Bilingual staff able to assist

Hours: By appointment

To contact: 717-669-3633 or [lpagan@bgclanc.org](mailto:lpagan@bgclanc.org)

**Community Action Partnership (CAP)**

601 S. Queen Street, Lancaster, PA 17603

Bilingual staff able to assist

Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10am-1pm, 2-4pm, by appointment

To contact: 717-299-7301

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**Crispus Attucks**

407 Howard Avenue, Lancaster, PA 17602  
Hours: Mondays, 9am-12pm, 1-5pm, Fridays 9am-12pm, by appointment  
To contact: 717-394-6604

**Columbia Life Network (CLN)**

18 S. 4th Street, Columbia, PA 17512  
Hours: Monday-Friday, 8am-4pm, afternoons by appointment  
To contact: 717-684-8094

**Elizabethtown Community Housing Outreach Solutions (ECHOS)**

61 E. Washington Street, Suite 110, Elizabethtown, PA 17022  
Bilingual staff able to assist  
Hours: Mondays & Thursdays, 8am-4pm, by appointment  
To contact: 717-361-0740 or [info@ECHOSLancaster.org](mailto:info@ECHOSLancaster.org)

**Northern Lancaster Hub**

560 S. Reading Road, Ephrata, PA 17522  
Hours: by appointment  
To contact: 717-361-0740

**Real Life Community Services**

240 Main Street, Suite B, Denver, PA 17517  
Hours: Monday – Thursday, 9am-4pm, Friday, 9am-1pm, by appointment  
To contact: 717-336-7797 or [chris@reallifecommunityservices.org](mailto:chris@reallifecommunityservices.org)

**Conestoga Valley Christian Community Services (CVCCS)**

2420 Gehman Lane, Lancaster, PA 17602  
Hours: Tuesday – Thursday, 9am-1pm, by appointment  
To contact: 717-208-3711 or [financial@cvccs.org](mailto:financial@cvccs.org)

**Crossnet Ministries**

127 W. Franklin Street, New Holland, PA 17557  
Hours: Mondays – Wednesdays, 10am-4pm, by appointment  
To contact: 717-355-2454

**The Factory Ministries**

3293 Lincoln Hwy E, Paradise, PA 17562  
Hours: Monday – Friday, 9am-4pm  
To contact: 717-687-9594

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**Solanco Neighborhood Ministries (SNM)**

355 Buck Road, Quarryville, PA 17566

Hours: Monday – Thursday, 9am-12pm, 1-4pm, Fridays 9am-12pm, by appointment

To contact: 717-786-4308 or [office@snministries.org](mailto:office@snministries.org)

**Ephrata Area Social Services (EASS)**

227 North State Street, Ephrata, PA 17552

Hours: Monday – Friday, 9am-4pm, by appointment

To contact: 717-733-0345

## Appeals Process

Applicants will be given the opportunity to submit an appeal for decisions on eligibility determination and payment assistance.

Appeals related to the denial of assistance will be heard by a four-member panel comprised of representatives of the Housing Authority, City of Lancaster, Housing Equity and Equality Institute (HEEI) at Tabor/LHOP, and one other organization. Applicants can visit <https://www.lchra.com/appeals/> to access an appeal form.