

Montana Emergency Rental Assistance Program FAQ

How does the program work?

The program provides rent and utility assistance to Montanans who have been financially impacted, directly, or indirectly, by the COVID-19 pandemic. Renters can apply directly for rental and utility assistance, and landlords can apply on behalf of renters so long as the application includes the renter's co-signature and required documentation.

How much assistance can I receive for my rent or utilities?

A household may receive assistance for past due rent, future rent, past due utility bills, and future utility bills. The maximum per month rent assistance is \$2,200 plus a maximum of \$50 per month late fees. The maximum per month utility assistance is \$300.

How many months can I receive assistance for my rent or utilities?

Eligible households can receive assistance for rent and utilities, including past due dating back to April 2020 and future owed, for up to 12 months. If additional assistance is needed to ensure a household remains stably housed, the program may provide an additional three months of assistance (for a maximum of 15 months), if funding is available. A single application will assist with prior rent and utilities and not more than three months of future payments. Additional assistance will require a new application to be completed and income to be re-verified.

Which utilities are eligible for reimbursement?

Electricity, home heating and internet costs are eligible.

Can I receive assistance for my internet bill?

Yes. The program is also able to provide \$50 per month for internet service. Internet service assistance will be paid directly to the household, if eligible.

How long will the assistance be available?

Funds will be available until at least September 30, 2021. The Department will re-assess the timeline for availability of funds in October 2021, subject to direction from the U.S. Treasury Department.

Who is eligible?

- Your household income cannot exceed 80% of the area median income. Check the area median income where you live here: <https://housing.mt.gov/Portals/218/Shared/RentalHousing/docs/IncomeLimits.pdf>
- You or someone in your household must have experienced income loss, financial hardship, qualified for unemployment benefits, or incurred significant costs due directly or indirectly to COVID-19
- Be able to show that you are at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability. For example, if you have received a past due rent notice or eviction notice or if you are experiencing unsafe or unhealthy living conditions.

What types of expenses can the assistance be used for?

Past due rent, future rent, rental deposits (if the reason for moving to a new unit was directly or indirectly as a result of COVID-19), late fees, past due utilities, and future utilities. Any rental or utility arrears, including late fees, prior to April 1, 2020 are not eligible.

Will the money be sent to me to pay my rent/utilities?

Montana Housing will issue rent and utility assistance payments directly to the landlord, property owner or utility provider. If Montana Housing is unable to reach the landlord or utility provider after 14 days and/or three outreach attempts, the applicant may be paid directly.

Where did the funding come from?

This assistance is available from \$200 million in federal funding allocated by Congress to the state of Montana through the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, and appropriated to the Department of Commerce through the passage of HB 3. To date, the Legislature has allocated \$17 million to the Montana Department of Commerce for this program.

Can Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) recipients also get assistance for utilities through the Montana Emergency Rental Assistance program?

Yes. However, LIEAP recipients cannot receive assistance from both programs for the same utility bill. Applicants will be asked to provide an unpaid utility bill or shutoff notice.

If I already received assistance from Commerce through the 2020 Emergency Housing Assistance Program, can I also receive Emergency Rental Assistance?

Yes, but will be determined case-by case.

Are Emergency Rental Assistance Grants taxable?

Montana Housing has been advised that these Emergency Rental Assistance grants are not subject to a 1099 reporting requirement, therefore the program will not issue 1099s. As advised, these grants are subject to the general welfare exclusion and not taxable to the recipient. Montana Housing is unable to provide tax advice. If needed, we encourage grant recipients to work with a Certified Public Accountant.

Will Emergency Rental Assistance cover any rent or utility payments that were due prior to April 2020?

No, rent or utility payments that were due prior to April 1, 2020 are not eligible. Unpaid security deposits corresponding with initial lease agreements effective April 1, 2020 or after are eligible.

Can households living in government-assisted housing receive Emergency Rental Assistance?

Yes. Households receiving other forms of rental subsidy are eligible to receive Emergency Rental Assistance, but only for the portion of rent that is considered the household's responsibility. These households will be required to provide a copy of the rent determination letter from the property or agency who is providing the rental subsidy.

I have a mobile home with monthly lot rent. Is lot rent eligible under this program?

Yes. Applicants with a monthly lot rent or lot lease payment can include that cost in the monthly rent figure in the program application.

I am going through an eviction proceeding as a result of COVID-19, is there legal assistance available?

The Department of Commerce has partnered with the Montana Legal Services Association (MLSA) on the [Montana Eviction Intervention Project](#), a program that provides civil legal assistance for Montanans facing evictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information visit MONTANALAWHELP.ORG or call 1.800.666.6899.