

**MAINE STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY
Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Program**

**Program Guide Updates
May 7, 2021**

Action and Page	Changes (in red)
Add – Page 4	<p>A. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND This Emergency Rental Assistance Program and Policy Guide (the “Guide”) is designed to provide information about Program rules, policies and guidelines. The Guide is a working document and will be kept up to date by MaineHousing staff. When Program guidelines or clarifications are made, MaineHousing will issue a notification of revisions to this Guide. When income limits change, new charts will be issued for replacement and made available on MaineHousing’s website identified below. The 2021 income limits, which were released on April 1, 2021, went into effect for this Program on April 22, 2021.</p>
Add – Page 5	<p>D. HOUSEHOLD INCOME DOCUMENTATION <u>2020 Annual Income Option:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For all household members 18 years of age or older, submission of signed 2020 IRS Form 1040; receipt for E-filed 2020 IRS Form 1040; or for households that file electronically through a volunteer organization, the cover page with the name of the organization and the PIN assigned for e-filing purposes; or
Add – Page 6	<p><u>Current Monthly Income Option:</u> A tenant who submitted their application on or after April 1, 2021 and prior to April 22, 2021, and who does not qualify under the 2021 income limits but does qualify under the 2020 income limits, is deemed eligible; the CAA must note in EmpowOR that the tenant is deemed eligible under the 2020 income limits.</p>
Add – Page 9	<p>G. RISK OF HOMELESSNESS OR HOUSING INSTABILITY The CAA must consider whether the household might benefit from Housing Stability Services and refer applicants to Housing Stability Services when appropriate. See Section L. Housing Stability Services.</p>
Add – Page 10	<p><u>Documentation of Occupancy and Rental Amounts:</u> A landlord or tenant may receive rental assistance for a unit the tenant has vacated only if the tenant occupies the rental unit on the day the tenant submits their application. A landlord may receive rental assistance for a unit they do not yet occupy provided they have entered into a rental agreement for the property.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #fff9c4; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><u>EXAMPLE:</u></p> <p>If a tenant applies on April 12 while living at Apartment A and moves to Apartment B before the application is processed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application is for rent for Apartment A only • The tenant or their landlord may receive arrears prior to April 12 for Apartment A • The tenant or their landlord may receive current or prospective rent under the application only for months in which the tenant still lives at Apartment A • The Apartment A landlord (or tenant) must return to CAA any rent paid for months when the tenant does not occupy Apartment A • The tenant may later apply for prospective rent (and possibly security deposit and screening or application fees for displacement due to COVID-19) for Apartment B when the tenant has a lease or rent agreement at Apartment B </div>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The tenant’s total months of rent and utility assistance for Apartments A and B may not exceed 15 months <p>Note: If a CAA becomes aware that a tenant is moving from the CAA’s service area to a second CAA’s service area, the CAA will let the second CAA know. Also, if a CAA becomes aware that a tenant is moving into its service area from another CAA’s service area, the CAA will let the other CAA know.</p>
Add – Page 10	<p><u>Documentation of Occupancy and Rental Amounts:</u></p> <p>CAAs must obtain, if available, a current signed lease or rental agreement that identifies the unit where the tenant resides and the amount of rental payment. <i>A lease that has turned to a month to month lease after the first year is a current lease.</i></p>
Add – Page 16 & 17	<p>L. HOUSING STABILITY SERVICES</p> <p>Housing stability services will be coordinated by the CAAs. Each CAA will establish a Housing Stability Team to assist households facing housing instability in their rental housing. The teams will include other community providers and will work collaboratively to identify and offer appropriate housing stability services for both renters and landlords.</p> <p>Potential indicators of the need for Housing Stability Services include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An eviction notice A past due utility or rent notice Living in unsafe or unhealthy living conditions, such as conditions that increase the risk of exposure to COVID-19 because of overcrowding Significant rental arrearages (2+ months). Landlord’s failure to submit a landlord application after CAA made 2 attempts to reach landlord. Potentially eligible households with incomplete applications. Tenants are not completing their application initiated by the landlord after 2 attempts to contact the tenant. A housing cost burden that makes it difficult for renters to afford their housing costs Informal rental arrangements with little or no legal protection History of or potential for exposure to intimate partner violence, sexual assault, or stalking Evidence the household is forgoing or delaying the purchase of essential goods or services in order to pay rent or utilities, such as food, prescription drugs, childcare, transportation, or equipment needed for remote work or school Harassment or verbal threats of eviction by a landlord Evidence the household is relying on credit cards, payday lenders, or other high-cost debt products, or depleting savings, to pay for rent or utilities, rather than wages or other income <p>Housing Stability Services will request the tenant to complete a release of information.</p>
Add – Page 19	<p>N. TENANT APPLICATION PROCESSING</p> <p>If a tenant submits an application and then fails to respond to an inquiry from the CAA for further documentation or information for a period of 30 days, the CAA may deny the application. The denial reason is either “documentation not provided” or “applicant not responsive.”</p>
Add – Page 19	<p>O. SUBSEQUENT REQUEST</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A tenant who has received fewer than 15 months in rental and utility assistance may be eligible for additional months of assistance. Tenants are eligible for up to 3 months of prospective rent at a time.

- EmpowOR will notify CAA staff 60 days from the **service date** that the **tenant** may be eligible for additional funding.
- The CAA will **verify that the tenant has additional months of eligibility for rental assistance.**
- **If the tenant has additional months of eligibility for rental assistance, the CAA will contact the tenant to determine whether they want to seek additional rent assistance and to let them know what documents are required.**
- **The additional assistance is considered prospective rent. A tenant may apply for additional assistance in 3 month increments.**
- **To apply for the additional assistance, the tenant must submit a Tenant Subsequent Request Attestation and any other required documentation. Documents may be uploaded to the same link the tenant used for their initial application.**
- If the tenant previously qualified for the Program using the 2020 Annual Income Option, the tenant will not need to provide income documentation again.
- Tenants that used the Current Monthly Income Option are required to submit new income documentation for additional assistance unless the monthly income determination was based on a HUD-50059 Owner’s Certification of Compliance with HUD’s Tenant Eligibility and Rent Procedures or a MaineHousing Tenant Income Certification or Recertification with an effective date within 12 months of the subsequent request.
- **The CAA will send an email to the tenant with the Tenant Subsequent Request Attestation for the tenant to complete and an email to the landlord with a new Landlord Emergency Rental Assistance Application & Attestation for the landlord to complete.**
- The tenant must demonstrate that they are still experiencing risk of homelessness or housing instability.
- The landlord must complete **and submit** the Landlord Emergency Rental Assistance Application & Attestation.

Add – Page 22

R. QUALITY ASSURANCE ACTIVITIES AND MONITORING
CAA Quality Assurance Monitoring

As part of the monthly reviews, CAAs will select a file sample, maintain a quality assurance log identifying the files and results, and upload results to **MaineHousing’s ShareFile, subfolder Quality Assurance Monitoring** for review.

Add – Page 26

Y. APPEALS

If an applicant is determined to be ineligible for assistant, CAA will notify the applicant in writing with the reason for the denial and let the applicant know that if they wish to appeal the decision, they must notify the CAA of their intent to appeal the decision in writing within 30 days. A review will be conducted by a person other than the one who made or approved the decision under review or a subordinate of this person. The reviewer will review the file, conduct necessary research, and give the Applicant an opportunity to provide additional information and present written or oral objections to the decision under review. In rendering a decision the CAA will evaluate the accuracy of the calculations, the level of documentation provided by the applicant, and the accuracy of the decision. The CAA will communicate the results of the research/review to the applicant and advise the applicant that it may make a final appeal to MaineHousing at: 26 Edison Drive, Augusta, Maine 04330-6046, Telephone Number 1-800-452-4668 (voice in state only), (207) 626-4600 (voice) or Maine Relay 711. **The CAA will communicate the following to the tenant: “We reviewed the information regarding your appeal of ineligibility for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program and unfortunately have confirmed that you are ineligible. If you continue to disagree with our decision, you may make a final appeal to Maine State Housing Authority. To appeal, send an email to RentReliefAudit@mainehousing.org within 30 days of this email. MaineHousing will**

	<p>investigate our reasoning for the denial and make a recommendation to the Director of MaineHousing to uphold or reverse the denial. MaineHousing will then communicate the Director's decision to you." MaineHousing will investigate the CAA's reasoning for the denials and make a recommendation to the Director of MaineHousing to uphold or reverse the denial. The Director's decision will be communicated to the applicant and is final agency action.</p>
--	---