

# State of Michigan's COVID Emergency Rental Assistance

## Program Guidance

**July 23, 2021**

*This guidance will be expanded upon or amended as the work continues.*

*Updates are highlighted throughout the document.*

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## PROGRAM SUMMARY

The State of Michigan's COVID Emergency Rental Assistance Program ("the Program") is designed to keep Michigan residents who fell behind on their rent and utilities during the COVID-19 pandemic in their homes. In addition, the Program may assist households that have an executed Writ of Restitution/Order of Eviction or are doubled up with other families or experiencing Category 1 Homelessness with motel assistance while they search for permanent housing. These families may then be eligible for additional assistance that may include application fees, security deposit, future rent, utility and internet assistance. The program utilizes a collaborative community process to expedite rental and utility assistance to COVID-19 affected tenants and their landlords.

Rental, utility, internet, motel and additional assistance in the amount of \$560 million will be distributed through MSHDA's network of Emergency Solutions Grant Fiduciaries and then sub-granted to Housing Assessment and Resource Agencies and other local service agencies. \$62 million in program funds are available for housing stability services, case management, legal services and administrative costs. Service Agencies will work with tenants and landlords to provide rental, utility and internet assistance for eligible renter households. Homeless households will be provided with case management if they are housed in a motel paid for by the Program. Legal services for renters will be provided by local legal aid organizations funded by grants made through the Michigan State Bar Foundation.

MSHDA is administering the Program and has convened a state leadership team comprised of staff from MSHDA, MDHHS, SCAO, Michigan Poverty Law Program and the Michigan State Bar Foundation. Their purpose is to guide the program's execution, monitor program outcomes, and distribute information within their respective agencies/areas of influence to aid in program effectiveness.

The Program is a partnership between multiple community organizations: Housing Assessment and Resource Agencies (HARA), Community Action Agencies (CAA), local Legal Services programs, judges and district court administrators. Other organizations can be added as necessary. These organizations will come together to design a local process whereby (1) tenants and landlords are served by the program so that tenants remain stably housed and landlords recoup rental arrears, (2) for court involved cases, the Landlord/Tenant docket is managed in a manner consistent with Michigan Supreme Court Administrative Order 2020-17 (as amended) and to facilitate service delivery by Legal Services and the HARA and (3) tenants and landlords are informed about the program, tenants are assisted by Legal Services and all parties work with the HARA to resolve eviction cases.

Partners will meet at least bi-weekly to design program operations, communicate results and other program issues, and discuss changes to improve processes and outcomes. HARAs will convene these meetings. HARAs will work with the courts and legal aid programs to distribute program flyers in Summons and Complaint mailings to share information on the program.

HARAs and other agencies involved in CERA utility assistance should contact utility providers to discuss CERA assistance and determine how to most efficiently serve tenants in need. When possible, arrangements for batch payments should be made with utility providers along with a plan for handling future utility assistance payments made on behalf of the tenants.

Based on consultation with MSHDA, local programs may administer the CERA program with additional rules to coincide with existing local codes/ordinances so long as these additional rules do not conflict with US Treasury regulations or slow the pace of serving eligible tenants and landlords.

The expenditure deadline for the ERA 1 funds is September 30, 2022. However, the US Treasury Department may recapture any funds not obligated by grantees as of September 30, 2021 if 65 percent of the funds are not obligated and reallocate/repay those amounts to grantees who, as of that time, have obligated at least 65 percent of their original grant.

MSHDA will be closely monitoring the expenditure of funds throughout the state and will work with each Continuum of Care/Local Planning Body (CoC/LPB) to address any problems that may arise regarding the expenditure of the funds. If it appears that the funding needs for any CoC/LPB were overestimated, the amount of funding for that area may be reviewed and some funds may be moved to a CoC/LPB where the funding needs may have been underestimated.

Program characteristics and guidance may change at any time based on funding availability, program experience, or revised US Treasury guidance.

## HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

- Grants will be made from MSHDA to the established fiduciary from the Continuum of Care (CoC) or Local Planning Body (LPB) for the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program. The fiduciary will then sub-contract with the Housing Assessment and Resource Agency (HARA) and other local service providers.
- HARAs will, in collaboration with local stakeholders, design an eviction prevention, utility and internet assistance process where tenants and landlords are notified about the program and ideally cases are resolved using a Settlement Statement before a court filing, and filed cases are resolved as often as possible by Conditional Dismissal Orders.
- CRF Emergency Rental Assistance funds should be expended on eligible households before accessing any other sources of eviction diversion or utility assistance funding (i.e. ESG, CSBG, CDBG, etc.). The exception to this is whenever possible, eligible homeless families should be served with ESG-CV Rapid Rehousing or Prevention Funds.
- HARAs and other local agencies providing Program assistance will provide case management to homeless families not eligible for ESG-CV who are benefitting from CERA with motel stays while searching for housing. These households may also be eligible for Program assistance with application fees, security deposit and future rent utility and internet assistance.
- Conditional Dismissal Orders, based on MCR 2.602, will outline the terms by which the landlord and tenant may resolve a rent dispute in a court case. Those terms will typically include eligible lump sum payments from the Program and other sources and the landlord's required waiver of late fees over \$400.
- Using a Conditional Dismissal Order instead of a judgment will protect the tenant's credit history.
- Tenants with incomes up to 80% of area median income are eligible for the rental and utility assistance.
- The Program is not compulsory for landlords and utility providers. If they refuse to participate, the rental and/or utility assistance payment will be made to the tenant so the tenant can pay the landlord and/or utility provider the amount due and any future payments if applicable.
- Using a Conditional Dismissal Order instead of a judgment will protect the tenant's credit history.
- Financial Status Reports (FSR) are required monthly to document program expenditures. Agencies may submit FSRs more frequently if needed to address cash flow issues. Agencies are also encouraged to establish a line of credit to assist with cash flow and timely program assistance payments.

## TENANT ELIGIBILITY

- Tenant household income must be no more than 80% of Area Median, **and**
- One or more individual in the household currently or at some point after March 13, 2020,
  - qualified for unemployment benefits or
  - experienced a reduction in household income or
  - incurred significant costs or
  - experienced other financial hardship due directly or indirectly to the corona virus outbreak, **and**
- The household:
  - is currently defined as Category 1 Homeless (Literally Homeless (1) Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning: (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (ii) Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); or (iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution or
  - is doubled up with another household or
  - has an executed Writ of Restitution/Order of Eviction or
  - can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability which may include a:
    - past due utility notice or
    - past due rent notice (including a ledger or statement showing rent arrears or a Notice to Quit) or an eviction notice
- Households may not receive CERA assistance to cover rental arrearages that were part of the landlord forgiveness for MSHDA's Eviction Diversion Program or paid for with MSHDA's Eviction Diversion Program funding (or any agency's eviction prevention program). Tenants may be eligible for CERA assistance to pay the balance due on the tenant repayment agreement from the Eviction Diversion Program if the tenant was not able to fulfill the repayment obligation to the landlord and the arrearages are from on or after March 13, 2020. A case note describing the situation and the outstanding balance amount should be included in the case file. The outstanding balance amount should be included on the CERA Program Worksheet on the "Total Rental Arrears after March 13, 2020" line.

## REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

- Proof of Income: The household's 2020 calendar year income or present income (within the past 60 days of application) will be used to determine eligibility and assistance amounts. Income verification may be shown through:
  - 2020 calendar year income (first two pages of IRS form 1040) or
    - The Adjusted Gross Income on line 11 of the 1040 is to be used
  - SNAP/Food Assistance Program "Notice of Case Action" letter if it is dated January 2020 or later.
    - Families that have three or less household members and are currently enrolled in the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) with income determination/redetermination since January 2020 are categorically eligible per US Treasury.
      - Household with four or more members are not include as categorically eligible because the income limits for FAP are higher than 80% AMI in many counties.
    - The Notice of Case Action letter can be accessed in the applicant's MI Bridges account
  - paystubs for all income sources, W-2s or other wage statements such as a 1099, bank statements demonstrating regular income, or a statement from an employer.
    - Paystubs
      - must be dated within 60 days of the application date
      - do not have to be consecutive
  - Self-attestation accompanied by agency case notes as proof of income is acceptable only when all other verification options are not reasonably or readily available, not for applicant convenience or agency efficiency.
- ID: Tenant state ID (or an alternate form of identification, as necessary) is required for only the primary adult household member
  - Expired IDs are acceptable.
  - Alternate identification may include a birth certificate, military ID, student ID, Medicaid or other health coverage card, voter registration card, or any type of official documentation including verification from a DHHS worker.
  - Verification of residency as noted below will be required for any form of identification that does not state the unit address. If the family lacks a current state ID, the case manager should work with the family to set up a plan for the household member to obtain one.

- Proof of Address:
  - If the tenant ID address does not match the address of the unit, the tenant must provide a recent utility bill, benefit statement, some other official documentation, or other reliable evidence verifying they occupy the unit for which the assistance has been requested. If the tenant has received any court filings, the court filings may be used as verification of residency or
  - Verification of Category 1 Homelessness provided in writing by the HARA or other local homeless service provider or
  - Verification of being doubled up with another household provided in writing by the household permanently residing at the unit
  
- Proof of Occupancy
  - Copy of the lease agreement if a written lease was completed.
  - If the lease is not signed, an email or documented phone call confirmation from the other party verifying the lease document/amounts and basic information are correct should be placed in the file.
  - Verbal lease agreements are also acceptable. Verbal lease agreements will need to be substantiated by utility bills in the tenant's name at the unit address, cancelled checks or other proof of prior rental payments such as a ledger, or other reliable evidence. Documents need to clearly place the tenant at the unit address during the time period assistance is being sought.
  - If there is not a written lease and the tenant has a Complaint – Termination of Tenancy – Non-Payment of Rent, this document may be used as verification of occupancy.
  
- Tenant Application
  - Required for all cases even if the landlord is applying on behalf of the tenant.
  - Applicants cannot be denied Program assistance due to not providing a social security number for any member of the household.
  - Paper applications must be provided to tenants that cannot or will not complete an online application.
  
- Landlord Application
  - A ledger can be attached to the application in lieu of completing the rental payment history.
  - Paper applications must be provided to landlords and tenants that cannot or will not complete an online application.
  - The landlord application is not required for tenants using a paper application seeking utility assistance only. Please see Utility Assistance Payment Information for additional details.
  
- Proof of Tenant Supplied Utilities: Copy of current utility bill(s) (gas, electric, water/sewer, trash removal and energy costs such as fuel oil) as stated in the lease as being tenant responsibility to pay.



- Trash removal will only be paid if it is included within another utility bill such as water or sewer. If trash is billed separately it will not be paid.
- If there is no written lease the utility bills must be in the tenant's name or the tenant must be able to show a history of having paid the utility bills in the past for CERA to provide utility assistance.
- Utility bills do not need to show an arrearage for the tenant to be considered for future utility assistance.
- Current account detail statements provided by the utility company are an acceptable substitute for a copy of the current utility bill if they include the same information included on a bill such as name, service address, account number, balance due, dates, etc.
- Proof of Internet Service: Copy of current internet bill showing service was in place or suspended due to non- payment at the time of program application, if tenant is requesting assistance with internet payments.
- Proof of Rental Arrears: Documentation showing tenant has rental arrears (statement from landlord, ledger, Notice to Quit, Complaint for Eviction or other court documentation)
- Proof of Court Costs: Court documentation verifying court costs if applicable. Court costs can only include expenses paid to the court and verified as court expenses. Attorney fees are not included in court costs.
- Rental Assistance Calculation Worksheet
- Landlord W-9 Form (if rent payment is made directly to the landlord)
- Proof of Agreement: Settlement Statement or Conditional Dismissal Order – All funds must be secured with a Settlement Statement or Conditional Dismissal Order in place before Program funds are dispersed to the landlord except for cases in which a landlord or utility refuses to participate in CERA and the payment is made directly to the tenant. By signing the application, the landlord and tenant are agreeing upfront to the Settlement Statement terms at the time of application. If a repayment agreement is part of the Settlement Statement or Conditional Dismissal Order, the tenant will be responsible for making those payments in the future as outlined in the Settlement Statement or Conditional Dismissal Order.
- Proof of COVID-Related Hardship
  - Documentation of one COVID hardship based on the chart below.
  - Hardships must have occurred on or after March 13, 2020 and may have since been resolved.
  - Automatic denials for no COVID hardship should not be issued. While the COVID pandemic has caused most households in Michigan experience some type of increase in costs or significant expenses since March 13, 2020, some applicants will mark “No” for the COVID hardship questions on the application. If the tenant marks “No” for all COVID hardship questions and the comment box (portal application) or hardship letter (paper application) is not clear and/or does not provide details indicating a COVID hardship, the

agency must follow up with the tenant. The agency should make at least two attempts to reach out to the tenant to get clarification on the COVID hardship response. These attempts and any additional information obtained must be documented in the portal by adding Notes in the audit log area. When talking with an applicant who has marked “No” for these questions, it may be beneficial to explore with the applicant what each question means with the reminder that there is not a threshold dollar amount to meet this program requirement. Some examples of COVID hardships that would meet the eligibility requirements include:

- Purchasing PPE
- Having to pay for delivery of groceries or supplies due to not being able to ride public transportation or go into a store
- Having to pay additional expenses due to children being home from school during the day. Examples include increased costs for food, school supplies, keeping the heat turned up during the day, childcare, etc.
- Having to pay increased prices and/or shipping for items due to lack of availability of products in the store
- Having to purchase more cleaning products such as disinfecting wipes, cleaners and hand sanitizer
- Reducing work hours to stay home and care for children
- Reducing hours or discontinuing employment for health reasons (for example leaving a job due to concerns of increased exposure)

Type of COVID Hardship	Best Documents to Show Proof	Alternate Documents to Show Proof
A member of my household qualified for unemployment after March 13, 2020	Unemployment Monetary Determination Letter OR screen shots from unemployment website showing payments and person's name	Signed letter from applicant stating the time period they received unemployment benefits
A member of my household has had a reduction in income after March 13, 2020	Signed letter from applicant outlining your original hours and pay rate and reduced hours and pay rate during the COVID outbreak	
A member of my household has incurred significant costs after March 13, 2020	Signed letter from applicant stating what type of increased expenses the household incurred during the COVID outbreak	
A member of my household experienced other financial hardship after March 13, 2020	Signed letter from applicant stating what type of financial hardship occurred during the COVID outbreak	

Online applicants only need to check the appropriate box regarding the COVID Hardship and provide a brief explanation in the comments box. A separate letter regarding COVID Hardship is not required for online applicants if they check a COVID Hardship box and complete the comment box.

## SELF-ATTESTATION OF INCOME and OTHER FACTORS

- While the Program seeks to be flexible about documentation requirements and to avoid undue documentation burdens, self-attestation should be used as verification as a last resort under limited circumstances.
- Self-attestation is acceptable only when all other options of verification are not reasonably or readily available, not for applicant convenience or agency efficiency.
- Applicants should be notified that self-attestation may delay the processing of their application because additional information may be required.
- Self-attestation is not acceptable verification of utility or internet bills.
- Agencies may not have more than 25% of their cases use self-attestation to verify income unless additional fraud prevention measures have been implemented by the agency and a description of these measures has been provided to and approved by MSHDA in writing.
- Zero income is considered self-attestation if there is no verification showing the loss of income.
- Situations when self-attestation may be relied upon:
  - To accommodate applicants with a disability
  - Extenuating circumstances related to the pandemic or household circumstances
  - Lack of technological access
  - Imminent eviction (within 14 days) and standard verification is not immediately available
  - Various income sources and/or self-employment that are cash payments and/or may not have a standard paystub such as babysitting, lawn care and plasma donations and the income source does not or will not provide written verification of the income.
- Case notes describing why self-attestation was used must be included for all cases with self-attestation. The case notes must include an analysis of why verifications could not be obtained and why it was acceptable to use self-attestation. For example:
  - Applicant babysits for cash and does not have any form of recordkeeping. Applicant states parents of children are not willing to write a statement of the income provided to applicant therefore self-attestation of this income was accepted.
  - Applicant has a disability that impedes ability to obtain verification; has a final court date in 10 days for eviction. Applicant is not able to locate paystubs, does not have a phone with a camera to screenshot electronic paystubs and does not have immediate access to a computer and printer to print paystubs. Employer will not provide another printed copy of paystubs to applicant therefore self-attestation of this income was accepted.

## FACT-SPECIFIC PROXY USAGE TO ENABLE SELF-ATTESTATION OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME

US Treasury FAQ dated 5/7/21 introduced the ability to establish a fact-specific proxy in conjunction with income eligibility determinations. The FAQ states:

*Fact-specific proxy: A grantee may rely on a written attestation from the applicant as to household income if the grantee also uses any reasonable fact-specific proxy for household income, such as reliance on data regarding average incomes in the household's geographic area.*

MSHDA has evaluated census data and will use a fact-specific proxy based on zip codes and household incomes. MSHDA will allow self-attestation of household income in zip codes where the median household income is less than 70% of the county Area Median Income (AMI).

Both the online and paper application will prompt the household to disclose all household income sources and upload/include third party verifications (pay stubs, benefit statements, etc.). When service agencies are evaluating the case for eligibility in zip codes within the fact specific proxy list, they will use all provided information from the household to determine the income level, but not seek out additional information from the tenant if less than full documentation was received. If the income isn't fully documented, the Reviewer or Approver will mark the 'Income Self-Attested' area as 'Yes' while they are processing the case in the CERA portal.

If the household reports income that is over 80% AMI, they will be denied assistance. For applications received outside of the fact specific proxy zip code list, service agencies will request additional information from tenants so that the household income is sufficiently documented as described in guidance.

Zip Code	City	County	Zip Code	City	County	Zip Code	City	County
48705	Barton City	Alcona	48743	Long Lake	Iosco	48756	Prescott	Ogemaw
48737	Glennie	Alcona	48748	National City	Iosco	48761	South Branch	Ogemaw
48728	Curran	Alcona	48739	Hale	Iosco	48635	Lupton	Ogemaw
48745	Mikado	Alcona	48770	Whittemore	Iosco	48654	Rose City	Ogemaw
48740	Harrisville	Alcona	49903	Amasa	Iron	49912	Bruce Crossing	Ontonagon
49839	Grand Marais	Alger	49902	Alpha	Iron	49960	Rockland	Ontonagon
49825	Eben Junction	Alger	49915	Caspian	Iron	49953	Ontonagon	Ontonagon
49884	Shingleton	Alger	49935	Iron River	Iron	49910	Bergland	Ontonagon
49895	Wetmore	Alger	48896	Winn Mount	Isabella	49665	Marion	Osceola
49450	Pullman	Allegan	48858	Pleasant	Isabella	49631	Evart	Osceola
49747	Hubbard Lake	Alpena	49263	Norvell	Jackson	49677	Reed City	Osceola
48703	Au Gres	Arenac	49202	Jackson	Jackson	48636	Luzerne	Oscoda
48658	Standish	Arenac	49074	Nazareth	Kalamazoo	48647	Mio	Oscoda
49073	Nashville	Barry	49007	Kalamazoo	Kalamazoo	49401	Allendale	Ottawa
48708	Bay City	Bay	49006	Kalamazoo	Kalamazoo	49743	Hawks Houghton Lake Heights	Presque Isle Roscommon
49616	Benzonia	Benzie	49001	Kalamazoo	Kalamazoo	48630	Heights	Roscommon
49683	Thompsonville	Benzie	49048	Kalamazoo	Kalamazoo	48656	Saint Helen	Roscommon
49084	Riverside Benton	Berrien	49052	Fulton	Kalamazoo	48651	Prudenville	Roscommon
49022	Harbor	Berrien	49507	Grand Rapids	Kent	48601	Saginaw	Saginaw

49098	Watervliet	Berrien	49503	Grand Rapids	Kent	48607	Saginaw	Saginaw
	Berrien							
49103	Springs	Berrien	49509	Wyoming	Kent	48724	Carrollton	Saginaw
49224	Albion	Calhoun	49548	Grand Rapids	Kent	48602	Saginaw	Saginaw
49799	Wolverine	Cheboygan	49504	Grand Rapids	Kent	48060	Port Huron	Saint Clair
49788	Kincheloe	Chippewa	49512	Grand Rapids	Kent	48039	Marine City	Saint Clair
49768	Paradise	Chippewa	49505	Grand Rapids	Kent	48097	Yale	Saint Clair
49736	Goetzville	Chippewa	49901	Ahmeek	Keweenaw	48453	Marlette	Sanilac
49710	Barbeau	Chippewa	49642	Idlewild	Lake	49883	Seney	Schoolcraft
49748	Hulbert	Chippewa	49304	Baldwin	Lake	49836	Germfask	Schoolcraft
49793	Trout Lake	Chippewa	49656	Luther	Lake	49027	Breedsville	Van Buren
48625	Harrison	Clare	49644	Irons	Lake	49043	Covert	Van Buren
48632	Lake	Clare	48440	Hadley	Lapeer	49056	Grand Junction	Van Buren
48831	Elsie	Clinton	48727	Clifford	Lapeer	49026	Bloomington	Van Buren
48853	Maple Rapids	Clinton	48444	Imlay City	Lapeer	49057	Hartford	Van Buren
49864	Nahma	Delta	48760	Silverwood	Lapeer	49013	Bangor	Van Buren
49829	Escanaba	Delta	49256	Morenci	Lenawee	49045	Decatur	Van Buren
49852	Loretto	Dickinson	48139	Hamburg	Livingston	49090	South Haven	Van Buren
49802	Kingsford	Dickinson	48816	Cohoctah	Livingston	48109	Ann Arbor	Washtenaw
49877	Ralph	Dickinson	49838	Gould City	Mackinac	48198	Ypsilanti	Washtenaw
49764	Oden	Emmet	48089	Warren	Macomb	48104	Ann Arbor	Washtenaw
49722	Conway	Emmet	48091	Warren	Macomb	48197	Ypsilanti	Washtenaw
49718	Carp Lake	Emmet	48015	Center Line	Macomb	48211	Detroit	Wayne
				Mount				
49769	Pellston	Emmet	48043	Clemens	Macomb	48201	Detroit	Wayne
48505	Flint	Genesee	48066	Roseville	Macomb	48204	Detroit	Wayne
48529	Burton	Genesee	48021	Eastpointe	Macomb	48203	Highland Park	Wayne
				Clinton				
48504	Flint	Genesee	48036	Township	Macomb	48208	Detroit	Wayne
48503	Flint	Genesee	49619	Brethren	Manistee	48218	River Rouge	Wayne
48502	Flint	Genesee	49626	Eastlake	Manistee	48238	Detroit	Wayne
48507	Flint	Genesee	49879	Republic	Marquette	48213	Detroit	Wayne
48458	Mount Morris	Genesee	49458	Walhalla	Mason	48234	Detroit	Wayne
48506	Flint	Genesee	49410	Fountain	Mason	48210	Detroit	Wayne
48532	Flint	Genesee	49402	Branch	Mason	48206	Detroit	Wayne
49968	Wakefield	Gogebic	49305	Barryton	Mecosta	48227	Detroit	Wayne
49959	Ramsay	Gogebic	49307	Big Rapids	Mecosta	48228	Detroit	Wayne
49938	Ironwood	Gogebic	49863	Nadeau	Menominee	48212	Hamtramck	Wayne
49911	Bessemer	Gogebic	49848	Ingalls	Menominee	48209	Detroit	Wayne
49969	Watersmeet	Gogebic	49874	Powers	Menominee	48215	Detroit	Wayne
		Grand						
49666	Mayfield	Traverse	49847	Hermansville	Menominee	48229	Ecorse	Wayne
		Grand						
49637	Grawn	Traverse	48618	Coleman	Midland	48202	Detroit	Wayne
48801	Alma	Gratiot	49667	Merritt	Missaukee	48205	Detroit	Wayne
48856	Middleton	Gratiot	48157	Luna Pier	Monroe	48217	Detroit	Wayne
49961	Sidnaw	Houghton	48133	Erie	Monroe	48216	Detroit	Wayne

49921	Dodgeville	Houghton	48161	Monroe	Monroe	48235	Detroit	Wayne
49931	Houghton	Houghton	48852	Mcbrides	Montcalm	48207	Detroit	Wayne
49963	South Range	Houghton	48829	Edmore	Montcalm	48141	Inkster	Wayne
49942	Kearsarge	Houghton	49756	Lewiston	Montmorency	48219	Detroit	Wayne
49917	Copper City	Houghton	49709	Atlanta	Montmorency	48214	Detroit	Wayne
49913	Calumet	Houghton	49746	Hillman	Montmorency	48224	Detroit	Wayne
49922	Dollar Bay	Houghton	49440	Muskegon	Muskegon	48126	Dearborn	Wayne
49965	Toivola	Houghton	49442	Muskegon	Muskegon	48223	Detroit	Wayne
48720	Bay Port	Huron	49444	Muskegon	Muskegon	48122	Melvindale	Wayne
48933	Lansing	Ingham	49309	Bitely	Newaygo	48221	Detroit	Wayne
48910	Lansing	Ingham	49312	Brohman	Newaygo	48120	Dearborn	Wayne
48915	Lansing	Ingham	48342	Pontiac	Oakland	48146	Lincoln Park	Wayne
48911	Lansing	Ingham	48340	Pontiac	Oakland	48225	Harper Woods	Wayne
48912	Lansing	Ingham	48341	Pontiac	Oakland	48184	Wayne Dearborn	Wayne
48906	Lansing	Ingham	48030	Hazel Park	Oakland	48125	Heights	Wayne
48823	East Lansing	Ingham	48034	Southfield	Oakland	48185	Westland	Wayne
48870	Palo	Ionia	48033	Southfield	Oakland	48180	Taylor Dearborn	Wayne
48865	Orleans	Ionia	48237	Oak Park	Oakland	48127	Heights	Wayne
						48174	Romulus	Wayne
						49638	Harrietta	Wexford

## GENERAL INFORMATION

- Rental assistance does not need to be provided to assist with utility, energy, or internet costs.
- Landlords and owners may apply on behalf of tenants meeting the eligibility requirements, so long as:
  - the tenant cosigns the application and provides required documentation to the landlord to be included with the application,
  - the landlord provides information on the rental assistance payment to the tenant and
  - the payments are used to satisfy the tenant's rental obligation to the owner.
- Rental, utility, and internet assistance can only be paid for amounts due on or after March 13, 2020.
- If a tenant has arrearages from before and after March 13, 2020 and some payments have been made during that time, those payments should be applied to the oldest arrearages, charges and fees regardless of the date the payments were made. For example, if a tenant did not pay rent for March and April and then paid rent in May, the tenant payment made in May should be applied to March rent.
- To calculate the number of months in arrears, take the total rental arrears (less late or other fees that were applied after March 13, 2020) and divide it by the monthly rent due and round that number up. For example, if the household has arrears (without late fees) of \$5,000 and their monthly rent is \$800, they are 7 months in arrears because  $\$5,000/\$800 = 6.25$  months.
- When calculating total rental arrears, late fees applied prior to March 13, 2020 do not need to be removed. Ideally the landlord will forgive these late fees. If the landlord will not forgive late fees applied prior to March 13, 2020 they will be the tenant's responsibility to pay. The landlord and tenant will need to agree upon a payment plan if necessary.
- 70% of the rental assistance will be reserved for households at or below 50% AMI.
  - Grantees must track their spending by tenant income category so that they ensure at least 70% of funds are spent on households at or below 50% AMI.
- Tenants will only be eligible to participate in the CERA program one time unless there are insufficient applications to fully spend down the funding.
- SER applications are not required to qualify for Program assistance.
  - SER applications are encouraged for households that are below 50% of AMI and have rental arrearages that exceed program limits.
- College students are eligible for Program assistance so long as they are named on the lease.
- For tenants with variable incomes, the averaged income amount should be used when calculating annual income in the calculation worksheet.

### Zero Income

- When interviewing the tenant it is important to inquire about all types of income, earned and unearned.



- If the household has zero income this must be noted on the tenant application and the family will be considered below 50% AMI.

### **Types of Housing**

- Homeless - Category 1 Homeless and Doubled Up Homeless: May be assisted with a motel while searching for housing (see Motel Assistance for Non-Lease Holders) or may be immediately assisted with application fees, security deposit, future rent and utilities and internet if applicable.
- Renting from a Relative: If the tenant and landlord are related, the case manager should investigate to ensure that the tenant has actually been living in the unit and past rent has been paid to the landlord.
- Mobile Homes: Tenants living in mobile homes may be assisted with Program funds. If the tenant is renting the mobile home and the lot, apply the FMR for the number of bedrooms in the unit (if there is only one person in the household apply the one-bedroom FMR regardless of the number of bedrooms in the unit). If the tenant owns the mobile home and is only renting the lot, the MH FMR should be used.
- Cooperatives: Tenants living in cooperatives are eligible for Program assistance.
- Land Contracts: Persons buying a property on a land contract are NOT eligible for assistance. Tenants renting a property from a land contract buyer are eligible for assistance.
- Motels: Tenants living in self-paid for motels are NOT eligible for assistance. These households should be evaluated for ESG assistance.
- Commercial Buildings: Tenants living in commercial buildings (stores, warehouses, etc.) are NOT eligible for assistance.
- Subsidized Housing: An eligible household that occupies a federally subsidized residential or mixed-use property may receive assistance, provided program funds are not applied to costs that have been or will be reimbursed under any other federal assistance.
  - If an eligible household receives a monthly federal subsidy (e.g., a Housing Choice Voucher, Public Housing, or Project-Based Rental Assistance) and the tenant rent is adjusted according to changes in income, the renter household may receive ERA assistance for the tenant-owed portion of rent or utilities that is not subsidized.
  - The agency must review the household's income and sources of assistance to confirm that the Program assistance does not duplicate any other assistance, including federal, state, or local assistance provided for the same costs.
  - Agencies may rely on an attestation from the applicant regarding nonduplication with other government assistance in providing assistance to a household.
  - Utility assistance provided to tenants through their rental subsidy program does not need to be considered for CERA.

### **Tenants Renting a Room**

- Obtain the following information and submit the request to [MSHDA-CERA@michigan.gov](mailto:MSHDA-CERA@michigan.gov) for a determination:
  - Is there a lease?
  - Is there verification of past payments made to the landlord?
  - Are the tenant and landlord related and if so, what is the relationship?
  - Has the tenant ever lived in the unit without being required to pay rent?
  - Has the landlord filed for eviction?
- If MSHDA determines that the tenant can be assisted with Program funds, 0-bedroom size unit should be used for the purpose of FMR.

### **Roommate Situations**

- Review documentation verifying the rent arrearage for the name(s) of the person(s) applying for assistance.
- Household income is calculated based on the income of the adult(s) listed on verification of past due rent.
- Unit size is based on the number of bedrooms the persons listed occupy unless there is only one roommate using one bedroom being evicted. If there is only one roommate being evicted and that person only occupies one of the bedrooms, use 0 bedrooms for FMR.
- If the person being evicted has children, the number of bedrooms used by the children need to be added to the number of bedrooms for FMR.
- If one or more roommates are assisted at the same time, any other roommates in the unit are not eligible to apply for Program assistance for the same time period/rental arrearage.

### **Moving Tenants**

- If the tenant wishes to move of their own volition shortly after the rental arrears assistance is provided, that is allowable.
- Future rental assistance may be provided, for eligible tenants, on the new unit if the new landlord completes the application and submits the required documents for payment.
- If the tenant is being required to move against their will, CERA can only be provided to the current landlord if it will allow the tenant to stay in the unit for the entire time period that CERA is paying forward rent payments. If a landlord refuses to allow the tenant to stay through the time period that could be covered by future payments, the rental arrears will be paid directly to the tenant so the tenant can pay the financial obligation or judgment against them. Future rent payments may be made to a future landlord once a lease has been signed and the landlord application and required documents have been submitted.
- Tenants moving out of units to doubled up situations with friends or family members will not be eligible for future rent payments to pay rent to the friend or family member.

## RENT-TO-OWN LEASES versus LAND CONTRACTS

Default of either a Rent-to-Own Lease or a Land Contract can result in an eviction, but a Rent-to-Own Lease is eligible for CERA benefits, while a Land Contract is not.

**The problem: the title at the top of an agreement may not match what is actually going on. Sometimes a Rent-to-Own Lease is a Land Contract in disguise.**

How can you tell what kind of agreement it really is? Unfortunately, there are no easy answers on this topic: Michigan law does not draw a clear line between the two kinds of agreements. Both are considered legal, if written properly, but what kind of agreement it actually is comes down to the particular terms – what they legally agree to defines the document, not the label at the top.

As you read the terms of the agreement, look for some Red-Light clues that suggest a Land Contract, and some Green-Light clues that suggest a proper Lease:

### Red Lights (could be a Land Contract):

- Tenant has to pay property insurance and/or property taxes.
- Significant amount of “rent” is credited toward purchase price (*more than 5% of the monthly payment*).

*The more money the tenant has paid to landlord towards the purchase price, the more the tenant stands to lose if the landlord evicts them for defaulting on payments.*

- Significant deposit required toward purchase price or purchase option (*5-7% of final purchase price or more*).
- If the rent-to-own agreement says it may be recorded (*whether it is actually recorded or not*).
- Term of Years is more than one year. (*Most Michigan residential leases are for 12 months, then going month-to-month thereafter.*)
- The document talks about forfeiture or foreclosure if the Tenant defaults.

### Green Lights (could be Lease eligible for CERA):

- Tenant has no obligation to purchase the property at the end of the contract and does not own the property at the end of the contract: the tenant just has an option to purchase for additional payment.
- Very little or no money is required as a cash “deposit” towards the purchase portion of the agreement.

*Proper leases often have a security deposit requirement, which is allowed under the law; a disguised land contract may have an additional cash deposit toward the purchase price or may try to say that the security deposit will be applied toward the purchase price.*

- Tenant does not have to insure anything other than their own personal belongings.

If you have any questions or concerns about whether a Rent-to-Own agreement is eligible for CERA benefits as a lease, or ineligible as a land contract, spend some extra time studying the terms, and asking for additional input.

## RENTAL ASSISTANCE PAYMENT INFORMATION

- Rental Assistance will be based on income level with households at lower income levels being offered longer periods of rental assistance.
- Rental arrears attributed to late fees charged on or after March 13, 2020 are capped at \$400.
  - Monthly late fee charges cannot exceed the late fee amount stated in the lease.
  - Late fees for tenants without a lease are limited to \$50/month.
  - Landlord must forgive any remaining late fees charged on or after March 13, 2020.
- Actual court costs of up to \$150 incurred on or after March 13, 2020 may be included for cases that have already filed for eviction. Landlord must forgive any remaining court costs charged on or after March 13, 2020.
- If the landlord is not participating in CERA and the funds are paid directly to the tenant to pay the landlord, the tenant will still owe the late fees and court costs above the program limits. If these fees and costs are not paid by the tenant, the tenant will risk eviction.
- Tenant is responsible for late fees charged prior to March 13, 2020.
- Tenant is responsible for arrearages and any other charges from prior to March 13, 2020.
- Tenant responsibility arrearages may be put into a payment plan agreed upon by the tenant and landlord with payments generally being split over a 12-month period.
- Tenants at or below 50% AMI can be considered for ESG, SER, CSBG, CDBG or other funds if these funds are necessary to fully pay the rent arrearage.
- Monthly rental assistance will be capped at 150% of HUD's Fair Market Rent (FMR) levels adjusted by county and unit size. Tenants are not disqualified from the program if their monthly rent exceeds this amount, but Program assistance is capped at 150% of FMR based on the unit size. Tenants may be referred to other programs such as ESG-CV or SER for possible assistance with the difference.
- A single tenant's maximum rental assistance will be 150% of the one-bedroom FMR regardless of actual unit size.
- For households with more than one person, assistance is based on the number of bedrooms in the unit, not the number of people in the household. For example, two people living in a three-bedroom unit would be assisted up to 150% of the FMR for a three-bedroom unit.
- Utilities will not be included when determining the FMR.
- Tenants are responsible for monthly rental amounts over 150% of FMR and must pay the landlord this portion. This may be done through a payment plan if agreed to by the landlord and tenant.
- The tenant is not required to accept the future rent assistance; however, this decision must be made by the tenant, not the agency providing Program assistance. If the tenant declines future

rent assistance it must be noted on the worksheet that the tenant has specifically expressed that they do not want future rent to be paid.

- The tenant must be living in the unit at the time the Program assistance funds are disbursed. Persons temporarily away from the unit (e.g., hospitalization, family visit) are eligible for assistance.
- Agencies must make payments directly to a landlord on behalf of the eligible household unless the landlord does not agree to accept the payment, in which case the agency may make payments directly to a member of the eligible household. Agencies must make reasonable efforts to obtain the cooperation of landlords to accept payments from the Program. The final outreach attempt or notice to the landlord must be documented. The cost of contacting landlords would be an eligible administrative cost. Outreach will be considered complete if:
  - a request for participation is sent in writing, by mail, to the landlord, and the addressee does not respond to the request within 14 calendar days after mailing; or
  - the agency has made at least three attempts by phone, text, or e-mail over a 10 calendar-day period to request the landlord participation; or
  - a landlord confirms in writing that the landlord does not wish to participate.
- Future rent payments may be made on a monthly basis or in one lump sum based on agency preference.
- If the landlord will not participate in any part of the of application process:
  - the tenant must provide a current utility bill or some other type of official mail that shows that they live at the address.
  - case workers should attempt to get confirmation of the rental arrearage, a copy of the ledger and monthly rent amount from the landlord over the phone or email. This documentation should be uploaded in the supporting documents area of the portal.
  - if the case worker is only able to get verbal confirmation of some information from the landlord, add a Note in the Audit/Activity Log section of the portal to document the information received.
  - if the tenant cannot provide a copy of the lease and no information is obtained from the landlord, the tenant must have some type of proof of the amount of rent that was paid to the landlord in the past. If the tenant cannot provide proof of the amount of rent paid to the landlord, FMR is the maximum rent amount permitted.
- If the household AMI has increased from up to and including 50% AMI to 51-80% AMI by the time the household returns for the additional three months of rental assistance, the household will still be eligible for up to 15 months of rental assistance if they meet other eligibility requirements.
- If a tenant declines rental assistance and only wishes to receive utility assistance, but then requests rental assistance after the Fiscal process is completed for the utility assistance, the tenant may only be considered for three months of rental assistance as a returning CERA participant. Agencies should proceed with the request based on the Additional Rental Assistance Guidance found later in this document.

## Rental Assistance

Tenant AMI	Total Full Months Rental Assistance (including up to 3 months future rent assistance)	Late Fees	Court Costs and Court
Up to and including 50% AMI	12 months	\$400 maximum	\$150 maximum
51-80% AMI	10 months	\$400 maximum	\$150 maximum

- **An additional three months of rental assistance may be provided if necessary, for housing stability, but is subject to availability of funds.**
- **Rental assistance is capped at 15 months total for households up to and including 50% AMI.**
- **Rental assistance is capped at 13 months total for households 51-80% AMI.**
- **Rental assistance for households moving from homeless/doubled situations is capped at 3 months of initial assistance and 3 months of additional assistance.**

## Rental Assistance Examples

### Up to and including 50% AMI:

- Example #1
  - 9 months of arrears on or after March 13, 2020
  - Tenant eligible for 9 months of arrears and 3 months future rent (12 months total)
  - Tenant may be eligible for one additional assistance block of three months future rent based on availability of funding and redetermination of eligibility through recertification process
- Example #2
  - 6 months of arrears on or after March 13, 2020
  - Tenant eligible for 6 months of arrears and 3 months future rent (9 months total)
  - Tenant may be eligible for one additional assistance block of three months future rent based on availability of funding and redetermination of eligibility through recertification process
- Example #3
  - 10 months of arrears on or after March 13, 2020
  - Tenant eligible for 10 months of arrears and 2 months future rent (12 months total)

- Tenant may be eligible for one additional assistance block of three months future rent based on availability of funding and redetermination of eligibility through recertification process
- Example #4
  - 12 months of arrears on or after March 13, 2020 and 4 months of arrears prior to March 13, 2020
  - Tenant eligible for 12 months of arrears for the arrearage amount from on or after March 13, 2020
  - Refer tenant to other sources of funding to assist with the 4 months of arrears prior to March 13, 2020 or the tenant and landlord can resolve the balance due
  - Tenant is immediately eligible for 3 months future rent based on availability of funding
- Example #5
  - 16 months of arrears on or after March 13, 2020
  - Tenant eligible for 12 months of arrears
  - An additional 3 months of arrears may be provided based on the availability of funding
  - Refer tenant to other sources of funding to assist with the 16<sup>th</sup> month and any additional months not covered by CERA due to funding limitations or the tenant and landlord can resolve the balance due
  - Tenant is not eligible for any future rent assistance
- Example #6
  - No rental arrears
  - Past due utility bill
  - Tenant eligible for 3 months of future rent assistance
  - Tenant may be eligible for one additional assistance block of three months future rent based on availability of funding and redetermination of eligibility through recertification process
- Example #7
  - No rental arrears
  - No past due utility bill
  - Tenant is not eligible for any CERA assistance

## 51-80% AMI:

- Example #1
  - 5 months of arrears on or after March 13, 2020
  - Tenant eligible for 5 months of arrears and 3 months future rent (8 months total)
  - Tenant may be eligible for one additional assistance block of three months future rent based on availability of funding and redetermination of eligibility through recertification process
  
- Example #2
  - 14 months of arrears on or after March 13, 2020 and 3 months of arrears prior to March 13, 2020
  - Tenant eligible for 10 months of arrears from after March 13, 2020
  - An additional 3 months of arrears may be provided based on the availability of funding
  - Refer tenant to other sources of funding to assist with the 3 months of arrears prior to March 13, 2020, the 14<sup>th</sup> month of arrears from after March 13, 2020, and any additional months not covered by CERA due to funding limitations or the tenant and landlord can resolve the balance due
  
- Example #3
  - No rental arrears
  - Past due utility bill
  - Tenant eligible for 3 months of future rent assistance
  - Tenant may be eligible for one additional assistance block of three months future rent based on availability of funding and redetermination of eligibility through recertification process
  
- Example #4
  - No rental arrears
  - No past due utility bill
  - Tenant is not eligible for any CERA assistance



## IMMINENT THREATS TO HEALTH AND SAFETY/RELOCATION

### Substandard Housing Conditions

- Tenants living in units with imminent threats to health and safety due to the unit being in poor repair may be assisted by the Program once the case has been processed to determine CERA eligibility.
- If the tenant had to move out of the unit due to the repairs not being done, the agency must determine eligibility based on the application date, when the tenant moved out, if the tenant fully moved out without the intention of returning or if the tenant is temporarily living elsewhere but has belongings in the unit with the intent to return to live in the unit. If the tenant moved out of the unit prior to the CERA application date with no intention of moving back to the unit, the tenant is not eligible for CERA assistance and should be referred to other housing assistance programs.
- The rent payments should be held by the agency or put into escrow until it has been verified both with the tenant and in writing (receipts or verification from a contractor or local code compliance) that the repairs have been made. If the repairs are not made, the originally escrowed funds are returned to the grant and, if applicable, the funds needed for relocation are drawn from the grant.
- Imminent threats to health and safety are defined as:
  - no heat due to heat source issues
  - no water due to plumbing issues
  - no hot water
  - raw sewage
  - black mold
  - significant holes in the roof where there are significant amounts of water in the unit every time it rains or snows
  - other conditions that present an immediate and significant threat to household health and safety
- If, while processing the case, the tenant states one or more of the imminent threats listed above is present in their unit, the tenant needs to communicate with the landlord in writing using all methods available (mail, email, text) to advise the landlord of the problem. Whenever possible, copies of these communications should be submitted to the agency for the tenant file.
- If the tenant has a court case the tenant should be referred to Legal Services.
- If the tenant does not have a court case, the agency will contact the landlord using all methods available (mail, fax, email, text) regarding the need to make necessary repairs and provide verification to the agency that the repairs have been made. The landlord must be notified that the agency will withhold the payment until the repairs have been verified. Copies of all communications/attempted communications should be retained in the tenant file.
- The landlord must be given the opportunity to make repairs before relocation will be considered.
- The LL must provide in writing from themselves or a contractor if necessary, within 5 days of request, the date of when the work will begin. If the documentation of when the work will begin is not provided within 5 business days or the work does not begin by the day stated in the written documentation, the tenant may be authorized to move.
- Repairs should generally be completed within one week from the start of the project. If the repairs are not completed within one week, the landlord must explain why it is taking longer. A determination of whether the additional time needed will be allowed will be made by the agency.
- Partial rent assistance payments (up to 50%) may be made to the landlord if the funds are needed to cover the expense of completing the repairs.

- If the landlord will not make repairs, with MSHDA approval, the family may possibly be assisted with a security deposit, application fees and up to 3 months rent to relocate.
- If the landlord is not responsive to any available means of communications from the tenant or agency within 14 calendar days, the tenant may be considered for relocation.
- Relocation determinations will be made by MSHDA. Agencies must send details of the situation and available documentation to [mshda-cera@michigan.gov](mailto:mshda-cera@michigan.gov) for a determination.
- Households that are assisted with relocation must be informed that they will be responsible for any penalties due to breaking the lease, if applicable.
- Households that are assisted with relocation may be assisted with both rental arrears (to prevent a judgment against the tenant) and future rent. Two CERA worksheets must be used for relocation cases, one for each unit to determine eligibility.
- Partner agencies are not responsible for finding a new unit for the tenant but should do whatever they can within reason to assist the tenant in locating decent housing. If agencies have a significant number of these cases, they may wish to dedicate a staff member or sub-grant a small amount of the funds to another CoC member to help the tenants in need of relocation.

#### **Landlord Supplied Utilities Shut Off**

- Tenants living in units without heat, water or hot water due to unpaid utility bills may be assisted because it may be presumed that the payments will allow for the utility arrearages to be paid so the utility services may be reinstated.
  - The landlord must be notified in writing that landlord supplied utilities must be reinstated within three business days of receipt of CERA payment or the tenant may be given the option to receive assistance with relocation.
- Future rent assistance payments should be made monthly rather than in a lump sum payment until utility issues are resolved.
- If there are tenant responsibility utilities for the unit, future utility assistance payments should be held until it has been verified that the landlord paid utilities have been reinstated.
- CERA will not assist with relocation due to only a lack of landlord supplied utilities in the unit. If the rental assistance has been paid and the landlord does not pay the utility bills to have the utilities reinstated, the agency should request assistance from Legal Services and/or the local municipality code compliance.

#### **Very Urgent/Severe Situations**

- CERA is not intended to replace systems and resources already in place to address immediate needs for various types of emergency situations.
- Resources that are already in place such as emergency shelters, code compliance and other programs intended to meet emergency needs should be utilized for households in need of immediate relief from their unsafe living situation while the CERA application is processed and the relocation determination is made, if applicable.

- Tenants that need to leave the unit and are already engaged with Rapid Rehousing may benefit more from working with Rapid Rehousing rather than CERA because they can receive longer forward rental assistance without the need to reapply.

#### **“Landlords” Not Owning the Unit**

- If a tenant thought they were living lawfully in a unit, but then finds out the person they were renting from is not the property owner, if the tenant is otherwise eligible for CERA (must have a utility arrearage since rental arrearages will not be considered in this situation), the tenant may be considered for relocation.
- Rental arrears will not be paid to the person posing as the landlord.
- With MSHDA approval, the household may possibly be assisted with a security deposit, application fees and up to three months rent to relocate. Details and documentation of the situation must be sent to [mshda-cera@michigan.gov](mailto:mshda-cera@michigan.gov) for a determination.

#### **Locked Out Tenants**

- Tenants who have been illegally locked out of the unit due to non-payment of rent should be referred to the police department for assistance.
- If the situation cannot be resolved by the police and the tenant does not have access to the unit, with MSHDA approval, the family may possibly be assisted with a security deposit, application fees and up to 3 months rent to relocate. Details and verification of the situation must be sent to [mshda-cera@michigan.gov](mailto:mshda-cera@michigan.gov) for a determination.

## **MOTEL ASSISTANCE FOR NON-LEASE HOLDERS**

Whenever possible, eligible homeless families should be served with ESG-CV Rapid Rehousing or Prevention Funds. Homeless families not eligible for ESG-CV may be assisted by CERA with motel stays while searching for housing, application fees, security deposit and future rent assistance. Agencies will use their discretion to determine if a household should be referred to CERA for motel assistance based on ESG-CV eligibility, shelter availability and the household situation.

### **Eligibility**

Household must be:

- Assessed through the normal Coordinated Entry System
- Currently living in a doubled up or Category 1 Homeless situation
- Actively searching for permanent housing or in the process of recovering from a medical situation with the intention of actively searching for permanent housing as soon as possible
- Determined eligible for CERA through the standard CERA application process and if applicable, recertification process.
  - Households may apply with a paper application or through the portal using an alternate email address for the landlord email address.
  - If there is an immediate safety issue requiring motel assistance before a CERA determination can be made, the agency should use the general emergency shelter program/existing resources to meet the immediate need. If the family is later determined to be eligible for CERA, motel costs from that point forward may be paid for with CERA funds.

### **Financial Assistance May Include:**

- Motel assistance provided on a weekly basis for up to 3 months with the possibility of one 3-month extension (total 6 months, all paid on a weekly basis) if eligible after recertification process
- Rent application fees
- Security Deposit
- Three months future rent (recertification may be required)
- Additional three months future rent (recertification required)
- Utility arrearages from previous unit only if the utility arrearage prevents the tenant from having utility assistance turned on once housed with a lease
- Future utility assistance once housed with a lease if there are tenant responsibility utilities
- Internet assistance once housed with a lease if the tenant wishes to establish internet service

### **Recertification and Extension Process**

Households benefitting from CERA motel assistance for a full three months must be recertified using the standard CERA recertification process prior to receiving an additional three-month block of assistance, whether it be for motel assistance or future rent assistance.

In addition, if a household needs motel assistance beyond the initial three months, the agency must submit a request for up to an additional three months of motel assistance. MSHDA expects that the vast majority of households will be permanently housed before exceeding three months in hotel stays, so this process should be conducted rarely. The request must be submitted to [MSHDA-CERA@michigan.gov](mailto:MSHDA-CERA@michigan.gov) 7-14

days in advance of the last night in the motel. The request for up to three additional months in the motel must include the following information:

- Head of household name and CERA#
- Has the household completed the CERA recertification process and been determined eligible?
- Is the household participating in weekly case management check in appointments with the agency?
- What housing search/relocation/case management assistance has been provided to the household?
- What progress has the household made in securing housing?
- What progress has the household made in securing income to support future housing?
- Where (county and city) is the household searching for housing?
- What special housing needs does the family have (accessible, large family/high number of bedrooms, walkable community/public transportation needed, specific location required for work, etc.)?
- What additional barriers are causing delays in locating housing?
- Estimate of how much longer it will take to secure housing for the household.

[MSHDA-CERA@michigan.gov](mailto:MSHDA-CERA@michigan.gov) will respond to the agency by email with a determination on the motel extension request.

#### Example One

- Household assisted with motel for 6 weeks
- Household assisted with three months future rent assistance
- Recertified and determined eligible for CERA
- Household assisted with final future three months rent assistance

#### Example Two

- Household assisted with motel for two months
- Household assisted with three months future rent assistance
- Recertified and determined eligible for CERA
- Household assisted with final future three months rent assistance

#### Example Three

- Household assisted with motel for two months
- Household assisted with three months future rent assistance
- Recertified and determined over income for CERA
- Household is not eligible for additional CERA assistance

#### Example Four:

- Household assisted with motel for three months
- Recertified and determined eligible for CERA
- Request for up to an additional three months of motel assistance submitted to MSHDA and approved

- Household assisted with motel for final three months
- Recertified and determined eligible for CERA
- Household assisted with three months future rent assistance
- Recertified and determined eligible for CERA
- Household assisted with final future three months rent assistance

### **Case Management**

- Households and agencies must minimally have a weekly telephone check in to discuss the household housing needs, housing search and progress made. Case managers should work with households to problem solve, provide information and referral, and connect households with services that may benefit the household.
- Case managers should reinforce motel policies requirements during weekly check ins, covering issues such as allowing staff in for cleaning, no guests, etc. Households should be informed that failure to follow motel rules may result in motel assistance being revoked.
- Agencies must minimally check in with the motel on a weekly basis to verify that the household is residing in the room and following motel rules.
- Households should be reminded of the recertification process requirements in a timely manner and assisted by the case manager with the recertification process if necessary.

### **Financial Information**

- Motel payments are capped at \$85/night or \$595/week unless there is no such option available due to seasonal or special event rates. Higher motel costs may be paid at agency discretion when there is no other option. Exceptions to the \$85/night cap should be made only in rare situations.
- If a household is assisted with a motel room that exceeds the \$85/night cap, the family will need to relocate to a lower costing room/motel at the end of the week or when one becomes available.
- Motel payments should be made on a weekly basis. Shorter time periods of assistance should be provided if the family will be moving into a different housing situation in less than seven days.
- CERA financial assistance funds will be used to pay for motel assistance.
- Agencies should not complete the fiscal process for CERA motel assistance cases until the future rental assistance is determined.
  - Once the household moves to new unit, the agency should complete steps to approve the case in the portal.
  - If the household decides to move in with family or another situation where they will not be a lease holder/paying rent, the agency should close out the case in the portal reflecting only the motel assistance.

### **Additional Information**

- CERA motel assistance is not intended to be a high-volume part of the program and should be limited based on HARA discretion through the Coordinated Entry Process.
- CERA does not provide food assistance.
- Once permanent housing is secured, CERA funds should be used to pay future rental assistance rather than referring the household to a different program.
- Motel assistance must be provided with respect to the motel room capacity limits with an adult present in each assisted room or set of adjoining rooms.

- Assisted households are expected to use the hotel room every day/night.
- Motel reservations must be based on specific individual family needs. Agencies should not pay for blocks or rooms that may not be used.
- If the motel requires a household to leave the motel due to motel rule violations, the agency will use its discretion to determine if the household will be assisted at a different motel.

**ADDITIONAL RENTAL ASSISTANCE**

Tenants assisted with **one** CERA Initial Assistance payment may be eligible for up to three additional months of assistance (subject to the availability of funds) based on the chart below:

Total Number of Months Initial Assistance Provided (arrears + future rent = total)	Up to and including 50% AMI Additional Months Allowed	51-80% AMI Additional Months Allowed
1	3	3
2	3	3
3	3	3
4	3	3
5	3	3
6	3	3
7	3	3
8	3	3
9	3	3
10	3	3
11	3	2
12	3	1
13	2	0
14	1	0
15	0	0

**Eligibility Requirements:**

- Tenant has been assisted with only one CERA rental assistance payment.
- Initial CERA assistance did not reach the maximum allowable number of months of rental assistance.
- Gross household income is below 80% area median income (AMI), for the area.
- At risk of homelessness.
- Currently renting.
  - If the tenant has moved, future rent may be paid to the new landlord if the required documentation is submitted by the landlord.



- If the initial CERA payment was paid directly to the tenant, agencies should attempt to verify with the landlord that the tenant paid the initial payment to the landlord.
  - If the landlord does not respond or will not disclose this information, the tenant will still be eligible for additional assistance.
  - If the landlord states the tenant did not pay the landlord the amount of rent assistance issued in the initial assistance payment to the tenant, this issue must be resolved with the tenant before additional assistance may be provided, unless the additional assistance is issued directly to the landlord.

Required Documentation:

- CERA Tenant Application for Additional Assistance
- Proof of Income: earned and unearned income for household members that live at the property and that are over the age of 18
  - Household income/benefits (unemployment, SSI, etc.) for one month, OR
  - Food Assistance Program Notice of Case Action form (only applicable for households with 3 or less people) OR
  - No additional income verification is required for households that were determined eligible for CERA initial assistance based on 2020 tax documents or FAP verification for households of 3 people or less
- Owner/Landlord or Management Agent W-9: only required if tenant has moved and is renting from a new landlord
- The Settlement Statement is not required for additional assistance.

Additional Information:

- A tenant may apply for additional assistance up to 45 days prior to the next rent payment due date that is not covered by CERA. Applications received early may be held for processing within 45 days of the rent due date.
- Additional assistance payments may be requested anytime within the 3 months following the last month paid by the initial CERA payments. Additional rent assistance payments may be used to cover past due and future rent payments but cannot cover months paid for in the initial assistance payment.
- Service agency must notify the landlord on file that the tenant has applied for additional rental assistance and confirm their business address for payment before payment is issued.
- The tenant's current income band will dictate how many additional months of rental assistance, if any, they are eligible for.
- If the tenant income is over 80% AMI, the tenant is not eligible for additional assistance regardless of what income band they were in for the initial assistance.
- Additional assistance payments should be made in one payment to the landlord.
- Additional assistance payments may be made directly to the tenant if the landlord will not participate in the program. Please refer to CERA Guidance on how to proceed when a landlord will not participate in CERA.
- Additional assistance only covers rent. Additional assistance does not include utility or internet assistance.

- If a tenant declined utility assistance or internet assistance during the initial assistance period, the tenant is not eligible to receive utility assistance or internet assistance at a later date.
- If a tenant declined future rent assistance during the initial assistance request, the tenant will only be eligible for up to three months of assistance in the additional assistance process.
- Tenants that are not eligible for additional assistance and/or are in need of additional utility assistance should be referred to other resources for possible assistance.

## UTILITY ASSISTANCE PAYMENT INFORMATION

- If the tenant is eligible for utility assistance and declines rental assistance, verification that the unit is a rental unit and not owner occupied should be obtained whenever possible and saved with supporting documents. Verification of property ownership can often be obtained through municipality websites.
- If tenants do not request utility assistance when applying for CERA, the agency may at its own discretion choose to follow up with these tenants to confirm whether they want utility assistance. Utility assistance cannot be added to a case once it is processed in Fiscal. Tenants seeking utility assistance after the Fiscal process is complete should be referred to DHHS for assistance.
- Households under 50% AMI are eligible for up to an additional \$500 beyond the household size limit if this is necessary to fully pay all utility arrears.
- The tenant must be living in the unit at the time the Program assistance funds are disbursed. Persons temporarily away from the unit (e.g., hospitalization, family visit) are eligible for assistance.
- Agencies must make payments directly to a utility/home energy provider on behalf of the eligible household unless the utility/home energy provider does not agree to accept the payment, in which case the agency may make payments directly to a member of the eligible household. Agencies must make reasonable efforts to obtain the cooperation of utility providers to accept payments from the Program. The final outreach attempt or notice to the utility provider must be documented. The cost of contacting utility providers would be an eligible administrative cost. Outreach will be considered complete if:
  - a request for participation is sent in writing, by mail, to the utility provider, and the addressee does not respond to the request within 14 calendar days after mailing; or
  - the agency has made at least three attempts by phone, text, or e-mail over a 10 calendar-day period to request the utility provider's participation; or
  - a utility provider confirms in writing that the provider does not wish to participate.
- If a utility payment is made directly to the tenant, the CERA Tenant Payment Statement must be completed and mailed to the tenant with the utility assistance payment.
- If the lease states the tenant is responsible for utility payments and the utilities are in the landlord's name, the utility payment may be made to the landlord.
- Utilities and home energy costs that are covered by the landlord will be treated as rent.
- If the tenant is eligible for utility assistance but is not behind on the utility bills, and the utility company will accept payment, the payment must go to the utility company and the tenant will have a credit with the utility company.
- The tenant is not required to accept the future utility assistance; however, this decision must be made by the tenant, not the agency providing Program assistance. If the tenant declines future utility assistance it must be noted on the worksheet that the tenant has specifically expressed that they do not want future utility payments made on their behalf.
- Late fees charged by utility providers may be included in the utility assistance payment.
- A utility priority list should be developed on the local level to determine how to apply utility payments when tenants have arrearages with multiple utility providers for a total amount greater than the maximum program utility assistance allowed. For example, it may be determined that gas and electricity will be prioritized over other utility assistance because locally there is another program that assists with water and sewer bills.
- Tenants with arrearages in amounts greater than the maximum program utility assistance amount should be referred to SER and other resources for possible additional utility assistance payments.

- When calculating utility arrearages, the total arrearage includes the past due amount plus the current balance on the utility bill.
- Future utility assistance payments will result in a credit towards months that have not yet been billed.
- Deliverable fuel is limited to the future assistance cap amount unless there is a past due amount.
- If the lease states the tenant is responsible for utilities (regardless of whether the tenant pays a fixed monthly utility amount or a variable amount based on actual usage) and the tenant pays the landlord for the utilities:
  - All utilities paid for by the tenant will be entered into the Utility tab of the worksheet
  - Utility arrearages owed to the landlord will need to be separated out from other charges on the ledger, totaled and entered on the utility worksheet.
  - If the utility amount is noted in the lease as a fixed amount but is not separated out on the ledger, for partial payments the agency can select to apply the partial payment to the rent or utility arrearage, whichever is in the tenant’s favor for increased assistance.
  - If the landlord is listed on the utility worksheet tab as the utility provider, the future utility payment will be made to the landlord at the same time as the payment for rental arrears.

### Utility Assistance

Household Size	Maximum Total One Time Utility Payment (Includes Future Payment)	Maximum Future Utility Payment as a Credit
1-2 persons	\$1,500	\$300
3-4 persons	\$2,000	\$500
5+ persons	\$2,500	\$500

**Tenants up to 50% AMI are eligible for up to an additional \$500 if needed to fully pay utility arrears.**

### Utility Assistance Examples

- Example #1
  - 1 person household under 50% AMI
  - Utility arrears \$750
  - Utility assistance payment \$750 + \$300 future payment = \$1,050
- Example #2
  - 6-person household 51-80% AMI
  - Utility arrears \$2,200
  - Utility assistance payment \$2,200 + \$300 future payment = \$2,500
- Example #3
  - 3-person household under 50% AMI

- Utility arrears \$2,600
- Utility assistance payment \$2,500
- Refer household to SER and other resources for possible assistance with the \$100 arrearage not covered by the program
- No future payment available
- Example #4
  - 3-person household 51-80% AMI
  - Utility arrears \$2,600
  - Utility assistance payment \$2,000
  - Refer household to SER and other resources for possible assistance with the \$600 arrearage not covered by the program
  - No future payment available
- Example #5
  - 3-person household, either income category
  - Household has utilities in their name but no utility arrears
  - Household has rental arrears
  - Household eligible for \$500 future utility payment
- Example #6
  - 3-person household, either income category
  - Household has no utility arrears
  - Household has no rental arrears
  - Household is not eligible for any CERA assistance

## **INTERNET ASSISTANCE PAYMENT INFORMATION**

### **Internet assistance will be structured as follows:**

- Internet assistance may be provided to a residence if it is a service that allows renters to engage in distance learning, telework, telemedicine and/or to obtain government services, or other significant life activity.
- Tenant must have a current internet bill showing service was in place or suspended due to non-payment at the time of program application.
- Eligible households will receive a one-time payment of \$50/month for internet services for six months (total \$300) paid directly to the applicant household member in one payment at the time eligibility is determined. The assistance is a fixed amount regardless of the actual cost of the internet service.
- The program will not pay for internet service acquired after the time of program application.
- Agencies may choose to pay the internet provider directly or pay the tenant for the internet assistance.
- If the internet provider will not accept an agency payment, the internet assistance must be paid directly to the tenant.
- If the internet assistance payment is made directly to the tenant, the CERA Tenant Payment Statement must be completed and mailed to the tenant with the internet assistance payment.
- If tenants do not request internet assistance when applying for CERA, the agency may at its own discretion choose to follow up with these tenants to confirm whether they want internet assistance. Internet assistance cannot be added to a case once it is processed in Fiscal.

## **THE ASSISTANCE PROCESS**

- Generally, the HARA will be the first point of contact for the tenant. The tenant's first contact may also be with legal aid or a court, which should refer the client to the HARA.
- Landlord and tenant applications will be completed.
- The HARA will collect the required documentation to determine eligibility.
- Every tenant with a court case should be evaluated for Legal Services. This should be relayed to the tenant as part of the Program process.
- Tenants without court cases may still be evaluated for Legal Services if the HARA believes there are any significant repair issues with the housing, or disagreements between tenant and landlord about terms of the lease or amount owed. This should be relayed to the tenant as part of the assistance process.
- The HARA and Legal Services (if involved in the case) will work with the Court and the landlord on the proposed resolution.
- The resolution will be documented either in a Conditional Dismissal Order (through the court), Settlement Statement (pre-court cases) or Tenant CERA Payment Statement (landlord opts out of participation in CERA and payment is made directly to the tenant).
- CERA applicants with court cases that require imminent resolution will be given priority over applicants without court cases throughout the duration of CERA. Tenants against whom judgments (or Conditional Orders of Dismissal) have been entered, where the tenants continue to live in the rental unit and are within their judgment payment period, are eligible for CERA and should be the highest priority applicants. Ideally these tenants will get an amended judgment/Conditional Order of Dismissal, but only when it is not at the expense of rapid handling of the application. The online application system will assist in prioritizing court cases. If agencies have staff capacity to process court cases as well as non-court cases, they should do so, but sufficient staff time should be dedicated to court cases that have the most imminent possible eviction. This does not mean that all eviction cases must be processed before all non-court cases. Only court cases that require imminent resolution will be giving priority for processing, agencies should be in frequent contact with their legal service counterparts to communicate on which cases are the most urgent.

### **Additional Information**

- The HARA staff are not required to participate in hearings unless ordered to do so by the Court. This is something that should be discussed with the local court on how to best interact with the court system. It may be beneficial in certain areas or situations to have the HARA participate in the hearings or be available to speak with Legal Services and/or tenants during hearings.
- Amounts not covered in a rental arrearage payment are considered the tenant's responsibility and must be provided for in a Conditional Dismissal Order, Settlement Statement or CERA Tenant Payment Statement before a Program Assistance Payment is made.

- Tenants may attempt to secure additional financial assistance from other eviction prevention programs to pay for any arrearages not covered by the Program. These should also be reflected in the Conditional Dismissal Order, Settlement Statement or CERA Tenant Payment Statement if available at the time those documents are executed.
- The Conditional Dismissal Order (with the exception stated in the next bullet), Settlement Statement or CERA Tenant Payment Statement will document the payment terms/dates by all parties. The Program worksheet may be attached to these documents to provide additional details.
- If the Conditional Dismissal Order is written to include late fees and court costs over the program limit on these expenses, and the landlord has signed the CERA application, the landlord must waive the late fees beyond \$400 and the court costs above \$150 regardless of what the Conditional Dismissal Order says. If the LL did not sign the application, then the payment needs to go to the tenant and the LL might be permitted to collect the additional late fees and court costs.
- Ineligible applicants should be referred to other eviction prevention resources that may be able to assist, including Legal Services.
- Households may be assisted by the Program one time only, except in the case of additional future rent payments for which the household may be eligible.

#### **Pending Cases**

- A pending case
  - is an application lacking necessary information or documentation for a determination to be made and
  - lacks response from the tenant (or landlord if the landlord is applying on behalf of the tenant) for up to 30 days.
- Care should be taken to follow up with tenants and landlords frequently and by any means possible (telephone, email, mail, fax, text, etc.) to obtain required documentation.
- Applicants with cases in a pending status should be sent written notice using the agency's standard request for information form. The notice should specifically list the missing documents and state that the case is in a pending status until the required documentation is submitted.

#### **Denials**

- Tenants may be denied Program assistance for five primary reasons:
  - Tenant is over income
  - Tenant does not have past due rent or past due utilities
  - Tenant has not experienced a COVID related economic hardship since March 13, 2020
  - Tenant has not responded to requests for information for 30 days
  - Tenant is facing eviction for reasons other than non-payment of rent, unless payment of CERA assistance will resolve the eviction threat



- Agencies should evaluate the situation to determine if assistance should be considered if the tenant is not otherwise at fault for the eviction, for example the landlord has decided to not renew the lease. Providing assistance may prevent a judgment against the tenant.
- Agencies should send details of the case to [mshda-cera@michigan.gov](mailto:mshda-cera@michigan.gov) for exceptions to this type of denial.
- Tenants denied Program assistance should be sent written notice using the agency's standard denial form. The denial form should provide details about the agency's appeal process.
- Tenants should be referred to other eviction prevention resources, including Legal Services.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE ROLE OF LEGAL SERVICES**

COVID Emergency Rental Assistance and the role of the Legal Services provider (“LSP”) will vary in each Continuum of Care (“CoC”)/Local Planning Body (“LPB”) based on previous eviction diversion program activity, any agreed upon arrangement between Housing Assessment and Resource Agency (“HARA”) and the LSP, and other variables. Regardless, the intent of CERA is that most participants with a court case (and occasionally tenants without court cases) will benefit from the LSP being involved in their case.

In general, the role of the LSP is to advocate for tenants in the CERA process, and to ensure that tenant interests are served and their rights protected and secured. Among the ways the LSP will perform this role are:

- Notify the HARA if there’s a need to change the total rent arrearage amount stated in the calculation worksheet for any reason;
- Consultation with tenants (and the HARA, as necessary) about any legal defenses and claims (such as repair issues) and any other issues relevant to their cases;
- Represent the tenant, as necessary, in negotiation or mediation of the dispute with the landlord, and possibly formally appear for the tenant in an eviction court case;
- Negotiate terms of Conditional Dismissal Order or Settlement Statement between the tenant and the landlord/landlord’s attorney.

In some areas and situations LSP staff will be present in the courthouse meeting (in-person or via Zoom) directly with tenants as they move through the CERA process. In other areas, the arrangement will not allow for the LSP to make immediate contact with a tenant, requiring that the HARA refer the tenant to Legal Services. This referral should be made as soon as practicable (including in cases where a court complaint has not been filed); while not necessary, a written referral is preferred. Upon referral, the LSP should follow up with the tenant to provide information about CERA related services it can provide. The tenant may decline LSP assistance, and the LSP may also decline assistance if there is a conflict of interest or other valid reason the LSP cannot assist the tenant. The LSP will determine what level of service the tenant will get, ranging from advice only to full representation.

The HARA should recommend that the tenant meets with the LSP so that they understand the legal issues related to the eviction, including potential defenses. If the tenant declines the offer of legal assistance, the HARA, to the extent possible, shall perform the roles outlined above.

If established in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), in some parts of the state, mediation services may be provided by an additional agency. Agencies providing mediation services may do so as a subgrantee of the HARA. Mediation should only be used if the tenant is represented by a lawyer or has expressly agreed to proceed with mediation without a lawyer. For mediation services, the HARA may choose to use up to 1/6 of its case management/admin funding to support these services. Mediation services are not a substitute for legal services.

### **Eviction Prevention for Immigrants – Michigan Poverty Law Program**

The Michigan Poverty Law Program (MPLP) has limited capacity to assist immigrants facing eviction who are not eligible for help from other legal aid programs. Many, but not all, immigrants are eligible for help

from their local LSP; this program is for those immigrants who cannot be helped by their local LSP. Eligible persons will receive legal advice (and possibly representation) to help avoid an eviction, regardless of immigration status. Services are available statewide. HARAs should consider making referrals of these tenants who need legal assistance and cannot be helped by their local LSP.

To make a referral, contact: [edp-mpl@lsscm.org](mailto:edp-mpl@lsscm.org) or 734-714-3237.

## ELIGIBLE COSTS

- Admin costs can be incurred starting January 1, 2021.
- Case management costs can be incurred starting March 8, 2021.
- Financial Assistance funds may be used for rental, utility and internet assistance.
- Financial Assistance funds **can** be used for relocation to a new rental unit if the current unit is in an uninhabitable condition (examples: no heat, extreme plumbing issues like sewage backups, significant roof leaks, etc.) or is extremely unsafe (for example history or threat of domestic violence).
- Case Management funds may be used for:
  - any staffing costs for staff providing housing stability service to clients
    - Activities related to assisting tenants to apply for CERA and community outreach to increase program awareness and reach underserved populations
    - Landlord engagement/negotiation and assisting them to complete applications
    - Case management and housing navigation services for households with hotel stays and those needing new rental units
    - Case management and referrals to additional agency services that will promote housing stability
    - Financial counseling
    - Legal services (through contracts with Michigan State Bar Foundation) and staff time connecting households with legal services
  - interpretation services – an invoice for services is sufficient for financial reporting
- Administrative costs may be used for activities directly in support of Financial Assistance or Case Management activities:
  - costs related to technology purchases, both hardware and software, printing/supply costs, office supplies, telephones, travel or other typical administrative costs.
  - staffing costs that are not directly related to housing stability services
    - staff time for application eligibility review and work in the portal to approve applications
    - staff time for HR, accounting, other CERA supporting activities
  - line of credit interest and fees
  - marketing and promotional items
- Indirect administrative costs may be billed to this program.

## **FORMS**

- Tenant Initial Assistance Application
- Landlord application
- Calculation worksheet
- Settlement Statement
- CERA Tenant Payment Statement
- Additional Assistance Application
- Monitoring Checklist

## **Signature Requirements**

- Electronic, typed and verbal signatures are acceptable on all Program documents and should be noted with the tenant's name, type of signature, case manager's initials and date:
  - Electronic: John Smith – electronic CM 3-31-21
  - Typed: John Smith – typed CM 3-31-21
  - Verbal: John Smith – verbal CM 3-31-21

**Instructions on How to Complete the Settlement Statement**

**SETTLEMENT STATEMENT –  
RELEASE AND WAIVER OF RENT ARREARAGE  
STATE OF MICHIGAN COVID EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
“CERA”**

This Settlement Statement and Release and Waiver of Rent Arrearage is prepared on Date Settlement Statement Completed, 2021, by and between:

Landlord: Name and address as listed in Lease

Tenant: Name(s) and address as listed in Lease

**RECITALS**

- A. The purpose of this Statement is to document terms between a Landlord and Tenant where the Tenant has unpaid rent accruing during the COVID-19 covered period of March 13, 2020 through December 31, 2021.
- B. Tenant and Landlord entered in to a lease dated Date of Lease, for the property located at Address, Michigan, Zip Code (the “Lease”).
- C. On or about Date of Notification, 2021, Landlord delivered to Tenant a Demand for Possession claiming breach of the Lease for non-payment of rent by the Tenant, or notice of accrued past-due rent.

**TERMS**

- 1. Tenant and Landlord agree that the Tenant owes Landlord unpaid rent, as of the date hereof, per the terms of the Lease is in the amount of \$Grand total amount owed to LL including amount from prior to March 13, 2020.
- 2. Landlord and Tenant agree the CERA program applicable total rent arrearage is \$Total amount of CERA rental arrearage, utility arrears and future payment if due to the landlord, late fee and court cost

assistance payment plus tenant portion (the "CERA Settlement"). Any and all remaining balance of past-due rent and all late fees and penalties accrued as of the date of this Agreement are herewith forgiven and released by Landlord according to the terms hereof.

3. The amount due to the Landlord shall be paid as follows:

- a. The CERA program shall pay Landlord \$ Total assistance minus future rental assistance from calculation worksheet no later than Date payment will be issued by agency, 2021 (the "Program Portion"). Agency fulfilling Program Portion payment: Name of agency issuing rental assistance payment.
- b. In addition, The CERA program shall pay the Landlord \$ Future monthly payment amount per month for Number of months of future rent payments, cannot exceed 3 months beginning on Date of first future monthly rent payment, 2021.
- c. Tenant shall pay regular monthly rent, as required by the Lease, for all future rent when due after their CERA assistance has ended.
- d. In addition, Tenant shall pay Landlord \$ tenant portion from calculation worksheet no later than Date the tenant portion will be paid in full to the LL, 2021 (the "Tenant Portion").

4. By making application to CERA the Landlord has agreed to:

- a) The settlement amount will be the Tenant's total obligation for rent, late fees, court costs, and other charges (recognizing that, if the CERA payment includes prospective rent, that payment might surpass the Tenant's present financial obligation). The settlement amount shall not include and the Landlord/Owner waives any late fees assessed after March 13, 2020 in excess of \$400 and any court costs in excess of \$150.
- b) When the CERA payment will not fully satisfy Tenant's financial obligation to Owner/Landlord and the settlement includes an installment repayment plan, if Tenant is performing that plan's repayment terms, which performance Owner/Landlord will cooperate with, Owner/Landlord will not take steps to evict Tenant for non-payment of the rent (or any other charges) that plan covers.
- c) It will waive any other present and known grounds for eviction against Tenant other than its nonpayment of rent claim or a claim based on a serious and continuing violation of the lease or law.
- d) Except for grounds permitted by Paragraph 3 above, or in MCL 600.5714(1)(b), (c)(i), (d), (e), or (f), or MCL 600.5775, Owner/Landlord will not take steps to terminate a tenancy anytime before 1 month after a CERA payment, or, if a CERA payment covers a period of prospective rent, until at least 1 month after that period.
- e) It has not received any other eviction diversion or rental assistance payments for this same arrearage for this Tenant.

5. By making application to CERA the Tenant has agreed that if funded, this application only resolves the issue of rent arrears and fees owed through the date of payment of rental assistance, and that all other obligations of the Lease remain enforceable.

## CERA SOFTWARE

### IT Support

- As questions arise regarding the CERA software, agency staff should attempt to resolve questions by watching the training videos provided by Kinetech, working with peers within their own agency and working with their management and/or IT staff who are familiar with the software.
- If agencies are not able to resolve their own questions, CERA software questions may be submitted by the agency management staff to [MSHDA-CERA-IT-Support@michigan.gov](mailto:MSHDA-CERA-IT-Support@michigan.gov). This email address is only for agency staff use and not for landlords and tenants in need of assistance with the application portal.
- If landlords or tenants have problems completing the online application process, agency staff should assist the tenants and landlords. If the agency staff are unable to resolve the tenant and landlord concerns, the same steps noted above should be followed and if necessary, management staff may email [MSHDA-CERA-IT-Support@michigan.gov](mailto:MSHDA-CERA-IT-Support@michigan.gov) for assistance in resolving the tenant or landlord issue.

### New CERA Software Users

New user requests must be submitted through the portal. Please click on “Partner Org Access Request” below the blue “Apply Now” button to submit your request. An agency Assigner must approve the user request (by using the “Access Request” area in their “Eviction Overview” dashboard) and then the system will send it to MSHDA for approval. When MSHDA approves the request, an email will go out to the user with their login credentials.

### Helpful Process Information

- **Required Documentation**
  - All CERA required documentation, including the W-9 must be uploaded to the portal for each case.
- **Entering Paper Applications**
  - When the paper application entry is complete it requests a signature. Agency staff should sign their name/put their initials and print their name in the box.
  - The signed tenant and landlord applications, calculation worksheet and Settlement Statement must be uploaded in supporting documents.
- **Paper Tenant Application/Landlord Portal Application**
  - The paper application cannot be uploaded in the portal and connected with the landlord’s existing application in the portal.
  - There are two options to resolve this situation:
    - Agency enters the tenant’s paper application in the portal and sends the link for that application to the landlord to redo the landlord application in the portal, so it is connected to the tenant application or
    - Agency resends the application link to the tenant from the landlord application in the Call Center role and the tenant submits an electronic application so it is connected to the landlord application.

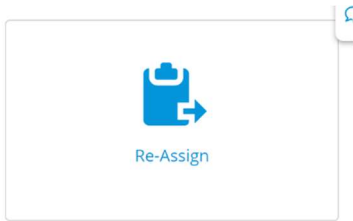


- **For processing networks with an agency processing utilities only:**
  - Assigner assigns case to a rental assistance Reviewer
  - Rent Reviewer:
    - determines overall program eligibility and rental assistance amounts
    - completes the calculation worksheet for rental assistance
    - uploads the calculation worksheet
    - completes the Rental Assistance boxes in the Basic Information Tab
    - adds a note to the case that rental assistance review is complete
    - “un-claims” the application which will send it back to submitted status
    - sends an email to the Assigner letting the Assigner know the CERA # and that it is ready to be assigned to a utility Reviewer
  - Assigner assigns the case to the utility Reviewer.
  - Utility Reviewer:
    - examines the utility documents and confirms payment amounts for each utility provider
      - completes the calculation worksheet for utilities
      - uploads the calculation worksheet
      - completes the Utility boxes in the Basic Information tab
      - “signs” the application to move the case to Processing status
  - Assigner assigns case to Processor
  - Processor:
    - reviews case to determine if it can be approved
    - when case is ready to approve, hits the “approve” button which sends the approval email to the tenant
  - The Fiscal roles for each agency work together on exporting the data from the system and making payments to the landlord and utility providers.
  
- **Fiscal Process**

The fiscal process should be done as the agency is paying out on each case, or at a minimum once a week. Ideally, the fiscal process is done before the finance staff are actually paying the case as the excel spreadsheet export is designed to have the necessary information to enable the finance staff to make the payment.

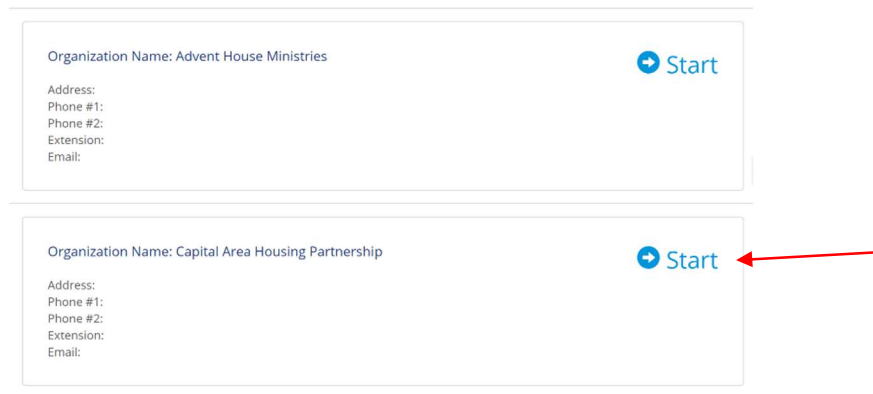
## Re-Assign Cases to Another Agency in Your Processing Network

To begin an Assigner must login to the online portal. They will start by clicking on the Re-Assign area in their dashboard.



They will then see the agencies in your processing network. Click on the “Start” area for the agency you wish to transfer cases to (not your organization).

List of Selectable Organization within Processing Network: 25



You will then see the cases and click on the cases you wish to transfer. They will turn red and then you will click “Re-Assign”. The selected cases will disappear, and they are now transferred to the selected agency.

From Organization  
 UCHC- United Community Housing Coalition

To Organization  
 Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency

Search **Re-Assign** ←

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## CERA Reviewer/Approver Task Guide

Agencies have flexibility to determine which steps will be performed by the Reviewer or the Approver except for the last “Approve” step. The final “Approve” step must be completed by the Approver, when the case is formally approved and assistance amounts are emailed to tenant and landlord notifying them that the case has been approved and will be scheduled for payment.

- ✓ All uploads are clear; account numbers are visible on utility statements
- ✓ Rental assistance was not covered by the Eviction Diversion Program
- ✓ If request is for additional 3 months assistance, review previous CERA assistance details to determine how many additional months or rental assistance tenant may be eligible for
- ✓ Address on lease matches address on application and ID/utility bills
- ✓ Use Google maps or Zillow to confirm that unit address is a residential property
- ✓ For utility assistance only cases, for single family homes, confirm through local municipality records that the tenant applicant does not own the home
- ✓ There are no significant differences between tenant and landlord applications for utilities (who is responsible), rent arrearage, monthly rent, # bedrooms in unit
- ✓ COVID Hardship documents (unemployment) or explanation (other hardships) meet eligibility requirements
- ✓ Past due rent notice or past due utility statement is present
- ✓ If internet stipend is requested, internet statement is present
  - In Household member’s name and address matches unit
- ✓ Income documents included:
  - One month of income documents have been provided for each income source
  - Income documents are no more than one month old (most recent pay stub end date can be no more than 30 days from application review date)
  - Recurring monthly benefits like SSI only need one statement dated within the past 12 months
  - If the first two pages of the IRS 1040 is uploaded, that will suffice for income documents
  - If FAP/SNAP Award Letter is submitted, verify the family has 3 or less persons
  - Self-attestation documents present if applicable

- ✓ Landlord W-9 and 220 form, if applicable, match what they put in application fields
- ✓ Terms of lease are consistent with application from landlord and tenant
  - Current rent may be increased from lease amount if past initial lease period
- ✓ Review landlord payment ledger to determine actual rental arrearage after March 13, 2020
  - Ledger is reviewed for consistency with tenant/landlord application and lease
    - Amount of arrearage
    - Amount of monthly rent
- ✓ Review income documents
  - If income varies between pay stubs, income will be averaged
- ✓ Complete calculation worksheet to determine tenant income and rental assistance, late fees and court fee amounts and uploads the excel doc into the case file
  - If utility documents are uploaded use calculation worksheet to calculate utility benefit
- ✓ Complete necessary fields in the Basic Information tab for months of assistance, AMI % , Funding Source, Rental and Utility Assistance amounts
- ✓ Complete Settlement Statement and/or CERA Tenant Payment Statement (if applicable) and upload into case file
- ✓ Landlord has uploaded Conditional Dismissal Order if applicable
- ✓ “Approve” case and enter required fields for rental, utility and internet assistance.
  - Attach Settlement Statement, CERA Tenant Payment Statement and/or Conditional Dismissal Order to Approval email

## CERA Basic Information Tab Data Fields

CERA# 110334	Organization Macomb Community Action	County MACOMB	1 AMI % 30.0	County Code 099	Total Rental Arrears 3,772.43
2 Funding Source 2021 - CERA Fund #1	3 # of Months Pledged 8	6 Other Housing Assistance 300.00	7 Future Rent Assistance 2,955.00	Total Assistance 9,830.37	
4 Months Pledged Description Dec, Jan, Feb, March, April, May, Jun, Jul	5 Rent Amount Pledged 6,083.60	8 Electric Company Name DTE	9 Electric Company Account # 920019879864	10 Electric Amount (\$) 491.77	
		Heating Company Name	Heating Company Account #	Heating Amount (\$) 0.00	
		Water Company Name	Water Company Account #	Water Amount (\$) 0.00	
		Sewer Company Name	Sewer Company Account #	Sewer Amount (\$) 0.00	
		Initial Total Utility Amount will be the total amount of all Utility document(s). Please update each of the utility fields to break down the actual payment amount.		Total Utility Amount 491.77	
				Total CERA Relief Amount (\$) 9,830.37	

1. AMI—For tenants that are under 30% AMI enter 30. For those that are between 30-50% enter 50. For those that are between 50-80% AMI enter 80.
2. Funding Source—select 2021 CERA Fund #1
3. # of Months Pledged is the total months of rental assistance for both arrears and forward.
4. Months Pledged Description—enter the months paid for.
5. Rent Amount Pledged—this is the total rental arrears plus late fees and court costs. If utilities are paid to the landlord they are included in this area as well.
6. Other Housing Assistance--\$300 internet stipend goes here.
7. Future Rent Assistance—the total future rent assistance approved.
8. Electric Company Name—enter the utility company name for any utilities paid to a provider.
9. Electric Company Account #--enter the account number.
10. Electric Amount—enter the total payment to the electric provider.

Continue to enter utility information for other utilities that are applicable. The Total Assistance, Total Utility Amount and Total CERA Relief Amount will auto calculate. All of the rental assistance and utility assistance fields are used to populate the Fiscal payment spreadsheets, so if they are not entered those spreadsheets will be incomplete.

## **FUNDS AND AGENCY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

- Engage in meetings and webinars with MSHDA staff
- Respond to requests for periodic check-in information
- 70% of the rental assistance will be reserved for households at 50% AMI and below. The fiduciary will be responsible for monitoring and tracking to ensure that at least 70% of the assistance is provided to households at or below 50% AMI.
- Agencies must complete 1099 forms for any landlord receiving rental assistance through the program.
- All applications must be entered into the online application system once it becomes available.
- Paper applications received after the online application system becomes available must be entered into the online application system within 5 business days of receipt.

### **CERA: Financial Status Reports Guidance**

- Fiduciaries will submit FSRs on a monthly basis on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month, beginning in April.
- FSRs will include documentation of how funds from advances were expended and/or provide documentation for expenses to be reimbursed. Each document should be named in MATT as it is uploaded. Required FSR documents are as follows:
  - FSR spreadsheet
  - General ledger that clearly denotes grant name (i.e. CERA) and budget category for all expenses
  - Any other documents an agency may use to track tenant-level financial assistance
- The grant allows for both advances and reimbursements. Grantees will start with a 25% advance and additional 25% advances with each monthly FSR.
- Any questions related to FSR submission should be sent to [MSHDA-CERA@michigan.gov](mailto:MSHDA-CERA@michigan.gov)

## **COMMUNICATIONS AND OVERSIGHT**

### **Program Communications**

- COVID Emergency Rental Assistance local workgroup meetings
- Periodic Check-In Meetings with MSHDA and/or written response to check-in questions
- FAQs
- [mshda-cera@michigan.gov](mailto:mshda-cera@michigan.gov)
- MSHDA's Website

### **Additional Information**

- Send problems, concerns, success stories and helpful tips to share with other CoC/LPB groups to [mshda-cera@michigan.gov](mailto:mshda-cera@michigan.gov)

### **Partner Agency Websites**

Agency websites must be updated to include:

- Link to MSHDA's online application portal
- Maintaining CERA tenant and landlord applications (or a link to [michigan.gov/cera](http://michigan.gov/cera)) for applicants who cannot or do not wish to use the applicant portal
- Information about how to submit paper applications to your agency which must at a minimum include email and US mail options

### **CERA: Monitoring Guidance**

MSHDA will select number of tenant files each month to review for accuracy and compliance. Fiduciaries are responsible for resolving issues with any audit findings.

## Monitoring Checklist

### COVID Emergency Rental Assistance – Initial Assistance

Tenant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Landlord Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Assisted Unit Address: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Requirement Checklist:

- Rental assistance sought now was not covered by the Eviction Diversion Program
- Tenant has not received CERA assistance
- Tenant Initial Assistance Application
- Landlord Application
- Copy of tenant state ID (or alternate form of ID) for the primary adult household member only
- Verification of tenant address if the ID address does not match the unit address or verification of homelessness
- Copy of lease agreement (or substantiating documents if there is no written lease)
- Copy of COVID Hardship documentation/statement:
  - Qualification for unemployment benefits OR
  - Reduction in household income OR
  - Incurred significant costs or other financial hardship
- Copy of verification of risk of homelessness or housing instability (not applicable if homeless):
  - Past due rent notice, notice to quit/demand for possession, court ordered summons, complaint, judgment or conditional dismissal OR
  - Past due utility notice
- Copy of income verification:
  - 2020 calendar year income (first two pages of IRS form 1040) OR
  - FAP/SNAP award letter OR
  - Paystubs for the past month for all income sources OR
  - Tenant self-attestation when allowable under program guidance
- Case notes regarding use of self-attestation, if applicable
- Copy of current utility bill(s) for CERA to provide utility assistance, if applicable



- Copy of current internet bill for CERA to provide internet assistance, if applicable
- Copy of court documentation verifying court costs, if applicable
- Assistance has been provided based on the rent and utility assistance chart
- Subsidy does not exceed 150% of the FMR based on unit size (one bedroom for single person households)
- Assistance Calculation Worksheet
- Settlement Statement (for pre-court cases)
- Conditional Dismissal Order (for court cases)
- CERA Tenant Payment Statement (if rent, utility and/or internet payment made to tenant)
- Landlord W-9 Form (if rent payment is being made directly to the landlord)

Important Reminders:

- CERA funds cannot cover rent arrearages incurred prior to March 13, 2020.
- Tenant should be referred to Legal Services if the landlord has filed for eviction or if tenant reports significant repair issues or disagreement with landlord over lease terms or amount owed.