

City of Oakland
Keep Oakland Housed
COVID-19 Renter Relief Program
Frequently Asked Questions

October 8, 2021

Q1: What is the Keep Oakland Housed COVID-19 Renter Relief Program

A1: The Keep Oakland Housed COVID-19 Renter Relief Program is a rental assistance program that provides assistance to support eligible tenants impacted, directly or indirectly, by COVID-19 with rental arrears and rent payments.

Q2: What is the purpose of the Renter Relief Program?

A2: The purpose of the Program is to prevent homelessness and increase housing stability in Oakland by assisting those most at risk of losing their home and becoming homeless or displaced as a result of COVID-19 health and economic impacts.

Q3: What is the source of funding for the Renter Relief Program and how much funding is available?

A3: The Renter Relief Program is funded by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the State of California through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) and by the City of Oakland with Community Development Block Grant – Coronavirus funds (CDBG-CV). The City of Oakland received \$12.8 million in round one of ERAP, of which \$11.6M was made available for rental and utility assistance. A second round of ERAP funding, ERAP 2, is providing \$16.6M for rental and utility assistance began in October. Oakland also anticipates receiving up to \$10.4M from the State of California for this purpose.

Q4: Who is eligible for rental assistance?

A4: To receive assistance, applicants must be:

- An Oakland resident; *and*
- A household of one or more individuals obligated to pay rent on a residential dwelling; *and*
- At least one or more individuals living in the household has:
 - qualified for unemployment OR
 - experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant costs, or experienced a financial hardship during or due, directly or indirectly, to COVID-19; *and*
- At least one or more individuals living in the household can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability; *and*
- Household has an income at or below 80% of Area Median Income (AMI)

Q5: Is the Renter Relief Program still taking applications?

A5: Yes, the program began taking applications again on October 1, 2021. Tenants may apply at <https://hpp.bayareacs.org> or call (510) 899-9289. Property owners with eligible tenants or former tenants may apply at bit.ly/oakland-rent-help or call (510) 238-6182.

Q6: Who is administering the Oakland Renter Relief Program?

A6: The City of Oakland is the Federal and State grantee and directs the program through its eight nonprofit partners who administer the direct rental assistance:

- Bay Area Community Services (BACS)
- Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency (BOSS)
- Catholic Charities of the East Bay (CCEB)
- Centro Legal de la Raza
- East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC)
- Eviction Defense Center (EDC)
- Safe Passages
- East Oakland Community Development Corporation (EOCDC) - *[for Outreach solely]*

Additional partners are being funded by All Home, a regional philanthropic partner, to conduct dedicated outreach and application assistance for the residents and include:

- El Timpano
- Peacemakers
- Vietnamese American Community Center of the East Bay
- Village Connect

Q7: What happens after an application has been submitted?

A7: Tenant applications are reviewed for eligibility by staff at the participating agencies, in order of priority based on highest anticipated risk of losing housing. If there is anything missing or incomplete in the application, staff reach out to the applicant to help in completing the application. Applications from property owners are reviewed by staff at the City of Oakland who will then reach out to the relevant current or former tenants and assist in the preparation of a tenant application which is handled by Bay Area Community Services.

Q8: Who does the assistance payment go to?

A8: In most cases the payment is made directly to the property owner or, in the case of a verified sublet or share, to the primary tenant. Under certain circumstances, such as if a property owner is unwilling to cooperate and a tenant is eligible, payment may be made directly to the tenant.

Q9: How much assistance can a household receive?

A9: There is no numerical cap on assistance. A household may receive up to 100% of past due rent from April 1, 2021 forward not to exceed 18 months of support. In some cases, households may receive prospective rent for up to three months, as well as or without receiving assistance for past due rent. Qualifying households may also receive assistance with utilities.

Q10: Is Oakland's Renter Relief Program tracking results in terms of geographic and racial equity?

A10: Yes, the program has done targeted outreach to many high-need communities and is tracking characteristics of those applying for and receiving assistance including race and ethnicity, zip code, income and family size. As of September 30, 2021, 42% of those assisted are Black and 27% are Latinx.

Q11: Is Oakland assisting people living in affordable housing?

A11: Yes, in the first round of ERAP Oakland set aside \$1.35 million to cover gaps for affordable housing providers and offered a separate application process. During ERAP 2 tenants and property owners of affordable housing may apply through the same process as other eligible tenants and property owners. Note that tenants who receive subsidies from other programs may only be assisted for the portion of rent that is not subsidized by another government source.

Q12: Is Oakland's Program the same as the State of California?

A12: For the period April 2021 through September 2021 the State of California and the City of Oakland both operated programs serving Oakland tenants and property owners. The City of Oakland program focused resources on those with incomes below 30% of the Area Median while the State provided support to additional property owners and tenants. Starting October 1, 2021 all Oakland tenants and property owners who have not previously applied to the State can and may apply to the City. Anyone previously served by the State of California or in the queue to be served by the State will continue to be assisted by the State.

Q13: Is Oakland's Program the same as Alameda County's?

A13: No. The cities of Oakland and Fremont received a direct allocation from the U.S. Treasury to cover their cities and also have funds from the State of California. People living in Oakland are not eligible for the Alameda County program. Oakland and Alameda County's programs are similar in what they offer to tenants and property owners but are managed by different agencies.

Q14: Am I eligible for more assistance if I have previously been assisted?

A14: Maybe. If you received assistance previously for 15 months of assistance or fewer, or did not receive assistance with 100% of the overdue rent you owe since April 2020, and you continue to be in need of assistance and eligible based on your circumstances and income, you may apply again and be assisted for up to a total of 18 months. **No one may receive more than 18 months of assistance.**

Q15: If I or my tenant was previously served by the State of California can I be assisted by the City of Oakland or its community partners now?

A15: No. If you were previously assisted by the State of California, or if you are in the queue to be assisted by the State of California, you must continue with your application with the State. If you were previously served for fewer than 18 months or less than 100% of the overdue rent balance, you may qualify for additional assistance.

Q16: Am I eligible for assistance if I no longer live in the unit where I owe rent, or if I am a property owner whose tenant vacated without paying all past due rent?

A16: Yes. Even if a tenant has left a unit, the program can still cover past due rent if the former tenant meets the program eligibility criteria and consents to have the past due rent paid on their behalf. In some cases, persons who have left their previous unit and need assistance moving into a new unit may also be assisted with move in costs.

Q17: Am I eligible for assistance if I do not have a written lease, or if I sublease from someone else?

A17: Yes, if you can show a pattern of rent payment and that a rental agreement exists between the parties, even if it is not written down, you may be eligible for assistance. If you are a sublessee and owe rent to a primary tenant you may be eligible. If you are a primary tenant and a subtenant owes rent to you, you may also be eligible to receive assistance, depending on the eligibility of your subtenant. You are encouraged to apply and a program partner will work with you to determine if your situation is eligible.

Q18: I do not speak English, do not have internet access to apply, need a reasonable accommodation or other assistance. What should I do?

A18: All of the agencies contracted by the program can assist applicants with the application process including preparing applications on their behalf. If you need help locating an agency that can assist you, please contact East Oakland Community Development Corporation at info@eastoaklandcdc.org or 510686-3501. Within the tenant application portal at bit.ly/oakland-rent-help, the tenant is given an option of “preferred language” to complete the application as well as preference of ERAP Partner agency the applicant wishes to work with.

Q19: I do not have U.S. Citizenship or documents to work in the United States. Can I apply?

Q19: Yes. Immigration status is not a required data point for this program.

Q20: I am a property owner, how can I find out if my tenant has applied for assistance?

A20: Property owners, Courts of Law and tenants may find out the status of an application by emailing HCDInfo@OaklandCA.gov.

Q21: I heard that the State’s eviction moratorium expired. Can I be evicted? (or if I am a property owner, can I evict my tenant?)

A21: The State’s eviction moratorium expired on September 30, 2021; however, the City of Oakland has an eviction moratorium that remains in place until the local state of emergency is declared over by the City Council. You may not be evicted for non-payment of rent while this moratorium is in place. However, we strongly encourage you to apply for assistance now, as when the moratorium is lifted a property owner may evict a tenant if they have made no effort to apply for assistance.

Q22: How can I learn more?

A22: Contact the Oakland Housing and Community Development Department by calling (510) 238-6182 or emailing HousingAssistance@oaklandca.gov, or visit: www.oaklandca.gov/resources/housingresources-erap-emergency-rental-assistance

Effective date: October 1, 2021