Murphy Administration Announces Second Phase of Rental Assistance Program for New Jersey Residents Impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic

DCA Banner

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Program Devotes Approximately $353 Million to Help Low- to Moderate-Income Households, Including the Homeless

TRENTON, NJ - Recognizing that New Jersey residents continue to need rental assistance during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Murphy Administration today announced that the application period for a second phase of the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program will open on March 22, 2021. The federally-funded program will provide approximately $353 million in rental assistance to low- and moderate-income households that have had a substantial reduction in income as a result of the pandemic, including those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges for many New Jersey residents, but we are committed to ensuring housing security for as many people as possible during this unpreceded time," **said Governor Phil Murphy.** "The Emergency Rental Assistance Program will provide help with rent for low- and moderate-income households where income has been impacted by the pandemic."

"This pandemic has created a crisis for so many of our fellow New Jerseyans who are struggling to pay their rent because they've lost jobs or aren't bringing home as much money as they once did. Governor Murphy and I urge people in this situation to quickly apply to the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program Phase II," **said Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver, who serves as Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA).** "We've been in these difficult times for more than a year as a nation and state and we want to help as many people as possible pay their rent, including assisting with overdue rent, to promote housing stability and prevent homelessness."

More than 15,000 households benefitted from the first phase of the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program that was launched in July 2020 in response to the pandemic. The Administration was able to help 7,000 more households than originally anticipated with the $91.75 million allocated in the program's first phase.

Applicants for the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program Phase II (CVERAP Phase II) may be eligible for up to 12 months of rental assistance to help pay for rent arrears incurred after March 13, 2020, and future rent to the extent that funds are available. Households that already received assistance in Phase I of the program but need additional rent support and have not yet received the maximum 12 months of emergency rental assistance (including CVERAP Phase I) can apply for additional funding.

Every three months, the applicant's household income and COVID-19 impact will be reviewed to determine if assistance is still needed and then recertified. If deemed eligible, applicants may only receive a maximum of three months of assistance at each recertification for future rent payments. Assistance that is no longer required will be used to serve additional families.

The application period will remain open until an adequate number of applications have been received to distribute the approximately $353 million allocated to the program. A notice will be published to inform the public in advance when the application period will close. Participants will be selected from the overall pool of applicants through a randomized process based on eligibility and lottery criteria.

An applicant may qualify for the assistance based on the following requirements:

- Is a New Jersey resident 18 years of age or older;
- Qualifies for unemployment or has experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant costs, or experienced a financial hardship due, directly or indirectly, to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Demonstrates a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability; and
- Has a household income at or below 80 percent of the area median income. Maximum income limits can be found online at https://www.nj.gov/dca/cverap2.shtml.

As part of the landlord contract, DCA will encourage landlords to agree to a reasonable payment plan for any rent arrears not covered by the rental assistance and commit to not filing for eviction for non-payment of rent during the term of the assistance.

Also, property managers or owners of a residential dwelling may apply for assistance on behalf of a tenant. The landlord must:

- Obtain the signature of the tenant on the application, which may be documented electronically; and
- Must provide documentation of the application to the tenant to notify the tenant that the application has been submitted.

DCA will provide the centralized application intake, eligibility review, and payment of assistance, which will be made directly to participants' landlords. DCA has authorized Nan McKay & Associates to help administer the program and to communicate with applicants and landlords.

CVERAP Phase II applications can be submitted online starting at 9 a.m. on March 22 with the use of a personal computer, laptop, smartphone, or tablet at https://njdca.onlinepha.com.

DCA will extend reasonable accommodations on a case-by-case basis to disabled individuals and people who have limited English proficiency. The Department will take into consideration the disability and the needs of households without internet access. Applicants seeking accommodations may contact DCA's Applicant Services at (609) 490-4550 for assistance during the hours of 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week during the open enrollment period.

Submission of a CVERAP Phase II application does not guarantee placement in the program. Only one CVERAP Phase II application per household will be accepted. Duplicate CVERAP Phase II applications will be rejected.

Additional information about the program, available in multiple languages, can be found online at https://www.nj.gov/dca/cverap2.shtml on the DCA website.

The program will also help provide households that are very low income and homeless with six months of future rent. Additionally, it will assist in paying for security deposits and case management for homeless households to help them bridge to more sustainable support by the end of the six months of rental assistance. These households will be selected by DCA through the Coordinated Entry process in each county's Homeless Management Information System.

For more information about DCA, visit **https://nj.gov/dca/** or follow the Department on social media: https://m.facebook.com /NJDeptofCommunityAffairs/

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