

CDBG EMERGENCY MORTGAGE AND UTILITIES ASSISTANCE PROGRAM POLICY

The Community Development Block Grant Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) Emergency Mortgage and Utilities Assistance Program provides for up to three months of past due emergency mortgage and utilities assistance payments to low- and moderate-income residents of the Unincorporated Escambia County. The assistance is made available to residents of the county that meet the rules and regulations established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The federal CARES Act provides for a supplemental appropriation of CDBG funds as authorized by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 as amended. Escambia County allocated a portion of these CDBG Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) funds to the Emergency Mortgage and Utilities Assistance Program.

PROGRAM PURPOSE AND GOALS

The Emergency Assistance Program is created to respond to unforeseen economic hardship created by the coronavirus. The goal of the Program is to provide emergency subsistence payments to low- and moderate-income residents of the Unincorporated Escambia County in danger of becoming homeless as a result of a hardship, verifiable loss of income, inability to pay monthly mortgage or utilities.

DEFINITIONS

Applicant: Means a person or household who submits a signed and completed application for assistance, which initiates the application process.

AMI: Means Area median income.

Assets: Means actual or imputed income from assets that is included imputed annual income, as defined by Section 8 regulation 24 CFR Part 5 Subpart F 5.603 (b).

Duplication of Benefits: Means when a person, household or other entity receives financial assistance from multiple sources for the same purpose, and the total assistance received for that purpose is more than the total need for assistance.

Forbearance: Means loan payments are suspended or reduced temporarily.

Household: Includes all dwelling occupants to include: friends, legal spouse, children, and relatives. Occupants not claiming the applicant dwelling as their primary residence should not be included in determination of eligibility if primary residence can be verified outside of the applicant's household and the occupant is not a signatory on any lease, deed or mortgage associated with the applicant dwelling.

Liquid Assets: Means assets in the possession of the household which can be readily and promptly turned into cash. Examples include, but are not limited to: checking accounts, savings accounts, certificates of deposit, Treasury bonds, money market funds, cash, or savings bonds. Retirement fund accounts are not considered liquid assets.

Low- and Moderate-Income Households: Means households whose income does not exceed 80% of the median income for the area as determined by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Public Utilities: Means electric light and power, water, and sewer.

APPLICATION PROCESS REQUIREMENTS

Application to the Emergency Mortgage and Utilities Assistance Program are accepted via a secure on-line application process. For those without internet access, assistance will be available in person by appointment only. On-line applications are accepted for a designated number of days which is determined by the availability of funding and advertised on the county's website and in a paper of general circulation. Once the designated number of applications have been received or the funding expended, the application portal is closed, and no additional applications may be submitted. Application packages must be complete before an eligibility review will be conducted. Incomplete applications may be denied. Staff will review the applications based upon the assigned lottery number to determine program eligibility. Applications are processed on a first qualified, first-served basis until funding is exhausted. First qualified, first-served applicant is an applicant that has completed the application, and provided required supporting documentation, and has signed the income certification and duplication of benefits forms. Application process requirements are posted the County's website and provided to media outlets.

- Mortgage assistance applicants must provide a copy of the mortgage statement showing delinquency. Mortgage assistance applicants must not owe property taxes.
- Mortgage assistance applicants must have fee simple title or life estate interest in the property.
- Mortgage assistance applicants must provide proof of homestead exemption.
- Public Utilities Assistance applicants must provide a copy of the utility bill showing delinquency.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applications are reviewed based on eligibility criteria determined by rules and regulations associated with the funding source being used to provide assistance. Program eligibility criteria is publicly available on the county's website, in a paper of general circulation, and made available upon request.

For the CDBG-CV Emergency Mortgage and Utilities Assistance Program, applicant must provide a completed program application and income and asset verification documents (including all sources of income for all household members) and the following documents at the time of applications. After review of the application package, additional documentation may be requested.

Applicable Required Documents

- At the time of application, applicants must show a COVID -19 impact such as loss of income, i.e., layoff, furlough, reduction of hours.
- Last six consecutive pay stubs.
- Last six consecutive bank statements.
- Proof of current monthly Social Security benefit or supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability (SSD).
- Proof of non-employment income (e.g., retirement; child support; alimony, unemployment benefits, veterans' benefits, cash assistance, etc.) for each household member.
- Profit and loss statement for the current year, and previous two (2) years of Federal tax return for all persons that are self-employed.
- Copy of the most recent IRS tax return for each adult member of the household.
- Copy of divorce final judgement, court order for child support/alimony; copy of supportenforcement document for each minor child.
- Proof of any other asset (e.g., retirement accounts, real property, certificates of deposit,stocks, bonds, money market accounts).
- Proof of student status for any adult member of the household (other than head ofhousehold or spouse) who is a full-time student.
- Valid state issued driver license or identification card or passport for each member ofthe household aged 18 or older.

- Social Security card of each member of the household.
- Copy of birth certificate, in lieu of social security card, may be accepted for minor household members.
- Any other documents determined necessary by the Housing Department after review of the application package.

DUPLICATION OF BENEFITS

Escambia County requires that any person or household receiving assistance agrees to repay assistance that is determined to be duplicative. Applicants certify that they are not receiving an award from another source in excess of their need by signing the CDBG-CV Duplication of Benefits Agreement. Escambia County will coordinate with other local service providers, to the extent feasible, to determine if a duplication of benefits is requested.

LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE

Level of assistance is based upon program funding source rules and regulations. For the CDBG-CV Emergency Mortgage and Utility Assistance Program, assistance level is based upon a review of mortgage rates and utility costs. Allocations provided to the household utilizing CDBG-CV funds shall be up to but not exceed three (3) months and \$8,000.00.

PAYMENT

All payments will be made in accordance with Federal, State, and City rules and regulations. Payments will only be made directly to the creditor. All creditors will be required to provide a W-9 form.

PROCEDURE

Upon receipt of a complete application. Staff will complete the following:

- Verify all documents.
- Determine income eligibility based on the program funding source guidelines and regulations.
- Determine funding availability.
- Upon completing eligibility review, a letter will be issued to the applicant

detailing either approval of assistance or denial.

- o Approval letter will identify the amount of assistance, commit the funds, and explain any additional terms.
- o Denial letter will identify the reason(s) for denial, methods for remediation (if applicable), and a timeframe for remediation. Remediation is not available for denials based upon income or lack of proof of a coronavirus related impact.

FAIR HOUSING AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

It is the policy of the Escambia County to affirmatively further fair housing and provide services in compliance with federal, state, and local laws. All services associated with this project shall be made available without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.