

OFFICE OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

HOMELESS PREVENTION AND RAPID RE-HOUSING PROGRAM

I. Background

The Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) was established to serve persons who are homeless or would be homeless but for this assistance. The program seeks to assist individuals and families who can remain stably housed after this temporary assistance ends. The funding provides temporary financial assistance to help individuals and families gain housing stability. The program is not intended to be a mortgage assistance program or to serve individuals and families who need long term assistance.

In Sarasota County, the program will be administered through three (3) subrecipients, Catholic Charities; Jewish Family & Children's Services and the Salvation Army. Other agencies will be permitted to access these funds, but must refer the applicant to one of the three (3) agencies who will submit the formal application to the county.

II. Eligible Applicants – HPRP Requirements

To be eligible to receive HPRP assistance, the applicant must meet the following conditions:

1. The Applicant must be homeless or about to be homeless as evidenced by receiving a three (3) day notice or other evidence that they are about to become homeless.
2. The Applicant must meet with a counselor from one of the three approved agencies who will conduct an initial consultation to determine the appropriate assistance for the Applicant.
3. The total household income of all residents that will reside in the home must be less than 50% of median income for Sarasota County as determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), adjusted by household size.
4. The Applicant must have no other housing options
5. The Applicant may not have any other financial resources or support networks to obtain or remain in housing.

III. Initial Client Assessment

1. During the initial consultation, the social service agency must verify and document each client's eligibility for the program (homeless or at risk of becoming homeless).

2. The consultation must determine whether the HPRP program is appropriate for the Applicant and determine if the Applicant is eligible for HRRP funding.

IV. Ongoing Eligibility Assessment

1. Applicants must continue to be assessed by the social service agency at least once every 3 months to determine if they are still eligible to receive assistance and whether the HPRP financial assistance is still appropriate for the Applicant.
2. During the ongoing eligibility assessment the social service agency must evaluate the coordination of other social services with the HPRP funding.

V. Eligible Activities

HPRP funds may be used for the following eligible activities:

1. Rental and Utility Assistance for up to 18 months
2. Arrears in rental (up to 3 months) but this payment counts towards the total 18 month service period
3. Security Deposits
4. Utility Deposits
5. Storage (up to 3 months)
6. Hotel/ motel vouchers (up to 30 days)
7. Cost of inspections
8. Case Management as defined in paragraph XIV.

VI. Eligible Properties

1. All properties leased using HPRP funds must be located in Sarasota County.
2. Any time an Applicant moves into different housing that housing unit must be inspected by the Office of Housing and Community Development to insure that the housing meets the HPRP Housing Standards. Existing housing does not need to meet any minimum housing quality standard.
3. Rental Assistance or Security Deposit paid on any unit with a member of the Applicant's Family who is under the age of 6 must be inspected and meet the Lead-Based Paint Requirements under federal law.
4. The total rent and utility cost for any leased unit must meet HUDs Rent Reasonableness standard.

VII. Local HRRP Program

In addition to meeting all HRRP program requirements, the Applicant must qualify under the local HRRP Program requirements. All Applicants for assistance in the Sarasota Program must meet 1 of the following 4 eligibility categories:

1. An Individual Needing Short Term Assistance
2. An individual who is an Active Job Seeker
3. An individual who is a Participant in an Educational / Retraining Program
4. An individual who has been approved for a benefit that has not yet started.

VIII. Individuals Needing Short Term Assistance

To qualify as an individual needing short term assistance, the applicant must have lost a job or had an unexpected medical expense that has prevented them from paying their monthly rent. The applicant must currently be employed and be able to demonstrate that they have the ability to pay for the housing after the assistance is provided. Assistance is limited to paying up to 3 months delinquent rent and 2 months prospective rent, not to exceed 5 months total.

IX. Individuals Who Are Active Job Seekers

Applicants who are active job seekers must be seeking employment that will provide sufficient resources to remain in housing after the assistance is provided. Being employed part time or under employed will not prevent the applicant from receiving assistance and is encouraged. The applicant must apply for a minimum of 4 jobs each week and provide documentation of these efforts. Assistance is limited to paying up to 3 months delinquent rent and 12 months prospective rent, not to exceed 12 months total or until available funds are exhausted or the program ends.

X. Individuals Who Are In Educational / Retraining Programs

Individuals in this category must be attending an educational / training program designed to provide stable employment upon graduation or completion of the program. The education / retraining must be in a field that is approved by the Director of the Office of Housing and Community Development upon recommendation by the Social Service Agency and the Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County. The applicant must demonstrate progress towards the completion of the program. Assistance in this category will be limited to paying up to 3 months delinquent rent and 18 months prospective rent, not to exceed 18 months total or until available funds are exhausted or the program ends.

XI. Individuals with Approved Benefits

Individuals in this category will be individuals who have demonstrated that they have been approved to receive a monthly payment benefit such as Social Security, Retirement, Workers Compensation or Unemployment Benefits and who have either been delayed in receiving the benefit or who are delinquent in their rent because of the delay. The applicant must demonstrate that they have been awarded the funds. Assistance in this category is limited to paying up to 3 months delinquent rent and 6 months prospective rent, not to exceed 6 months.

XII. Application Process

All Individuals seeking assistance must apply through one of the approved social service agencies. The Social Service Agency will be responsible for processing the application and submitting it to the Sarasota Office of Housing and Community Development for final approval. The initial checks will normally be written by one of the three social service agencies and reimbursed by the County. Subsequent checks may be issued directly by the County.

XIII. Evaluation and Underwriting

The Director of the Office of Housing and Community Development is authorized to approve eligible applicants in conformance with the HPRP regulations consistent with these policy guidelines.

XIV. Case Management

The Social Service Agency may be paid for case management expenses as provided in the HPRP program guidelines. The maximum amount of case management that any one agency may receive is \$40,000.

XV. Administration of the Program

The Director of the Office of Housing and Community Development will administer the HPRP Program consistent with these guidelines and is authorized to enter into written agreements with Social Service Agencies to help implement the HPRP Program consistent with these guidelines.

In the event an affected party believes that the Office of Housing and Community Development is not interpreting these policies correctly, the affected party must request a meeting with the Director to discuss and seek resolution of the conflict.

If, following a meeting with the Director, the issue remains unresolved, the affected party will have the ability to appeal the Director's decision to the City / County Management Staff as defined in the Interlocal Agreement for the Cooperative Administration of Housing and Community Development Programs. The written appeal must be filed with the Director within 15 days of the meeting with the Director. The affected party must, in writing, describe the issue and the reason they believe the interpretation is not accurate. The City / County Management Staff will consider the request, within 45 days, and make a final decision. **The decision of the City/County Management Staff is final and may not be further appealed.**

XVI. Conflicts with Federal Law

In the event these policies are found to conflict with Federal law, now or in the future, Federal law will take precedence. The Director of the Office of Housing and Community Development is authorized to amend these policies to the extent necessary to make these policies consistent with federal law. Within five working days of making any changes to these policies, the Director must notify the City / County Management Staff with a description of the changes made to these policies and the reason for any changes.

XVII. City / County Management Staff Approval Authority

The City/ County Management Staff is authorized to evaluate and approve any request that deviates from these guidelines if such a request demonstrates that it is in the best financial interest of the Office of Housing and Community Development program.