



## **Implementation Plan - COVID-19 Human Services Response and Community Assistance Non-Departmental Account**

DHHS will provide access to these funds to community members through the office of Housing Stabilization Services (HSS). Funds will be available through two different programs, as outlined below. The \$2 million will be split equally into the two programs. In both cases, HSS staff will first leverage all other Federal or State resources available and will use local funds to fill in remaining gaps. Applications will be available through a phone screening with HSS staff. Residents can call 311 to generate a service request and a HSS staff member will reach out within 4 business days. In the upcoming weeks, Services to End and Prevent Homelessness will establish a single phone number and email to receive inquiries about this program. Spanish speaking staff are available to assess applicants and will make use of the language line for households who do not speak English or Spanish.

### **Prevention**

HSS will evaluate households for funding to prevent evictions. Families must meet the following base guidelines to be eligible for financial support:

- Leaseholder/Homeowner in Montgomery County since at least February 2020
- Family income, at time of application, must be below 40% of the area median income
- Rental/mortgage delinquency must be due to a COVID-19 related change in income
- Must be spending at least 50% of household income on rent
- Documentation that the household is behind on housing related payments (for example ledger or overdue notice from landlord)

HSS staff will work to ensure the family has applied for all other non-County resources before providing local dollars. This includes mandatory application for unemployment benefits, if potentially eligible.

HSS will then consider all sources of accessible income the household has from the past 45 days. This includes employment, unemployment, economic relief payments from federal or local level, SSI/SSDI, temporary cash assistance, etc. This is done by reviewing bank statements, social security award letters, pay stubs, etc. Additional documentation may be required to access other funds.

After reviewing income for all household members, HSS will award grants of up to 100% of rent for 3 months, aiming to ensure no household is expending more than 40% of their income on rent. In almost all cases, checks will be made out to the landlord and leaseholder jointly. Benefits are capped at \$4000 per a household. If a household's rent exceeds the average rent, as published by DHCA for an appropriately sized unit, HHS will calculate benefits from the average rent.

## **Diversion**

Diversion grants support households from entering the homeless continuum and ensuring that those experiencing homelessness have a path to rapidly exit. HSS will evaluate households for either:

- Small, typically one-, or two-time grants to divert a household with existing housing from losing that housing. These grants are focused on households that may have an informal leasing agreement, staying with extended family or friends. These grants are offered as part of a mediation between the household and primary leaseholder/property owner to ensure that the household can stay in their current housing situation. Grants typically range between \$300-\$500 but are adjusted according to household size and case specific needs.
- Mid-sized grants to allow a household experiencing homelessness to rapidly exit. These grants are flexible in amount and length to align with the specific situation of the household. Grants typically range between \$1000-\$3000 but are adjusted according to household size and case specific situations.

For both types of diversion grants, eligible applicants:

- Are a resident of Montgomery County since at least February 2020
- Family income, at time of application, must be below 40% of the area median income
- Must be spending at least 50% of household income on rent (if already housed)
- Documentation that the household is behind on rent payments (written confirmation from landlord if already housed)
- Commitment from landlord/property owner to provide housing (if exiting homelessness)

HSS staff will review household income and rental obligation. Grants will be set based on family circumstances and after negotiation with the landlord/property.