



Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) Overview for the Massachusetts Health Care Training Forum (MTF)

July 22, 2021

July 26, 2021

COVID-19 EVICTION DIVERSION INITIATIVE (EDI)



The **Eviction Diversion Initiative (EDI)** launched in October 2020 to keep tenants and homeowners safely and stably housed, prevent COVID-19 related evictions and homelessness, and support landlords.



\$171 million total state commitment for FY21

- ✓ \$100 million in emergency rental assistance through RAFT
- ✓ Up to \$12.3 million to provide tenants and landlords with access to legal representation, mediation, and related services
- ✓ Nearly \$50 million for post-eviction rapid rehousing



\$437 million federal funds directed to Massachusetts from the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) in December 2020.



\$360 million additional federal funds estimated to the state from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) signed in March 2021.

EVICTION DIVERSION INITIATIVE – HOW FAR WE HAVE COME



October

- Eviction Diversion Initiative announced, and the Administration commits \$171 million to EDI programs for FY21
- The state moratorium on evictions and foreclosures ends on October 17th
- Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) benefit cap increases from \$4,000 to \$10,000 per FY20 supp budget

November

- Public information campaign is completed: outreach to 150+ community-based organizations, MBTA and highway signs, social media, and standing up 2-1-1 as the front door for housing help
- Organizations across new and expanded EDI programs staff up and ultimately hire nearly 400 individuals

December

- FY21 budget is signed into law, including more funding and key policy changes to RAFT and Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance (ERMA) housing programs
- The Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) is enacted, directing \$437 million in federal funds to the state

January

- Rental Assistance Processing (RAP) Center launches to increase application processing capacity
- MassHealth & DTA income verification reduces documentation requirements for RAFT-ERMA applicants
- ERMA program benefit cap increases from \$4,000 to \$10,000

February

- \$21.1 million in RAFT payments are distributed to 5,436 households during this month, a record high
- Family shelter caseloads and new entries remain low; similar trends seen in HomeBASE & other rapid re-housing programs

March

- RAFT assists 8,336 households with \$27.5 million
- Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) launches, making \$400+ million available to households
- Passage of American Rescue Plan Act brings estimated \$360 million in federal dollars to the state

April

- Together RAFT, ERMA, and ERAP assist 9,388 households with \$28.1 million.



RAFT VS. ERAP OVERVIEW



RAFT	ERAP
Who is Eligible?	
Renters and homeowners at 50% Area Median Income	Renters at 80% Area Median Income
What is the Benefit?	
Up to \$10,000 in rental, mortgage, and utilities assistance within 12 months	<p>Benefits are capped at a maximum of 18 months of arrearage (<i>after 3/13/2020</i>) or ongoing rent assistance.</p> <p>Prospective rent assistance is distributed in three (3) month increments.</p> <p>Households may receive up to 18 months of arrears or up to 18 months of prospective rental assistance, or a combination of both, not to exceed 18 months of total benefits.</p>
What does the Benefit Cover?	
Overdue or future rent or mortgage costs, utilities and moving expenses	Overdue or future rent costs, utilities and moving expenses



ERAP may be used on the following expenses:

RENTAL ARREARS

- May be used for rent due on or after March 13, 2020
- Cannot cover a period exceeding 18 months
- For renters with income-based subsidy, can only cover tenant-paid portion of rent

UTILITY ASSISTANCE

- Will cover up to 12 months of eligible utility arrears up to a maximum of \$2,500

MOVING RELATED EXPENSES

- First and last month's rent, security deposits, moving trucks, and furniture payments up to \$1,000

PROSPECTIVE RENT PAYMENTS (STIPENDS)

- Rent stipends may be paid for rent due after the time of the application and only approved in 3-month increments
- If an applicant has rental arrears, at least **a portion of the arrears must be paid** for the applicant to receive an ERAP stipend
- ERAP stipends will pay for **100%** of the household's full monthly rent amount, regardless of income
- Stipends will be approved for a **3-month period** and then the applicant will need to recertify.



Households must meet the eligibility criteria below to be served through ERAP



COVID IMPACT

Households must certify that they have experienced a financial hardship related to COVID-19 - through self-attestation on the application



RISK OF HOMELESSNESS

This include: a notice of arrears or balance overdue, court summons, notice to quit, notice of eviction, or a letter from host if doubled-up



RENTING OR MOVING INTO A RENTAL

ERAP is only for individuals who are currently renting (seeking funds to remain in their current rental housing) or moving into a new rental



INCOME AT OR BELOW 80% AREA MEDIAN INCOME (AMI)

AMI varies by region



Households that receive an income-based local, state or federal subsidy for their rent, such as (public housing, Section 8, or MRVP) are:

- ✓ Eligible for back rent (arrears) only
- ✓ Eligible for up to 18 months of back rent (arrears) payments
- ✓ Eligible for moving expenses and utilities
- ✗ Not eligible for future rent (stipends)



Applicants are presumed income eligible if they meet one of the following:

1

Receive benefits from the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) or MassHealth plans

2

Were approved by the Department of Unemployment Insurance (DUI) for unemployment insurance

3

Provide an income-eligibility letter from a benefit program
See slide 16 for list of benefit programs

If applicants do not meet one of the above, they can provide one of the following:

1

Proof of 2020 Annual Income

Applicants can submit evidence of 2020 annual income, in the form of their 2020 Federal tax filing, in lieu of monthly income documentation.

2

Proof of Monthly Income

Applicants can still demonstrate income eligibility by submitting pay stubs, benefit award letters, etc.

3

Attest that they have Zero Income

APPLYING FOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE

An application that is fully complete, with all required documentation, will be processed faster.

Incomplete applications will be closed if documentation is not provided within 14 days of notification of missing documents.

Please ensure they have all documentation needed to apply.



APPLYING FOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE



In order to apply to the Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), renters will need to provide the following required documents:

I.D. FOR HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

- This document will need to include the head of household's full name and date of birth.
- Examples include a state issued driver's license, birth certificate, or passport.
- Expired IDs will be accepted

PROOF OF CURRENT HOUSING

- This includes a lease, tenancy agreement or a tenancy at-will form

VERIFICATION OF HOUSING CRISIS

- Notice of arrears or balance overdue
- Court summons
- Notice to quit
- Notice of eviction
- Letter from host if doubled up

VERIFICATION OF INCOME

- 1. Presumed eligibility:** Households receiving benefits from the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) or most MassHealth plans are presumed eligible.
- 2. Benefit Letters:** Households can provide an income eligibility form from one of the following benefit programs:
 - Public housing (state or federal)
 - Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8)
 - State housing vouchers: MRVP, AHVP, DMH, or DDS housing vouchers
 - LIHEAP
 - Massachusetts subsidized childcare
 - Veterans Chapter 115 benefits
- 3. Self-Submitted Documents:**
 - Annual income may be verified by 2020 Form 1040 (s); OR
 - Monthly income may be verified by two paystubs from the past 60 days, plus most recent benefit letters (social security, child support, unemployment, etc.)



USE A DESKTOP OR LAPTOP COMPUTER IF POSSIBLE

Current application works best on a desktop or laptop device



USE AN EMAIL ADDRESS

If you don't have one, use a free service to make one beforehand



SIGN THE APPLICATION

All adult members of the household must electronically sign.



DOUBLE-CHECK ALL REQUIRED DOCUMENTS ARE INCLUDED

Complete documents will be processed faster



REMEMBER TO SUBMIT

Applications will only be processed once submitted



LET THE LANDLORD KNOW AN APPLICANT IS APPLYING

They will need to provide a W-9 and proof of ownership before the application is approved

APPLICATION STATUS NOTIFICATIONS



New applicants must be notified by email, phone, or mail at the following status changes.

Application Submitted

Applicants will receive an application submission receipt.

Missing Documentation

Applicants will be notified if there is any missing documentation.

Close-Out or Denial

Applicants will be notified if they are:
Denied: Applicant is ineligible.
Closed-Out: Missing documentation (tenant or landlord), unresponsiveness leading to incomplete application.

Approval

If an applicant is approved, they will be notified of approval and will be sent a copy of the landlord terms of agreement to participate.



Examples of types of cases that would benefit from mediation

Apparently intractable dispute with high level of conflict requiring help of skilled mediators

There is a complex range of other issues beyond non-payment, such as property condition or landlord/tenant behavior that need resolving

Miscommunication or lack of communication is the primary barrier to agreement and mediation can improve communication

Parties are not far apart, but some repair to the relationship is needed in order to reach agreement

Tenant does not qualify for available subsidy programs but landlord and tenant are willing to explore other options such as a repayment plan

Tenancy is coming to an end but a "softer landing" (extra time) may be possible through mediating realistic move out plans

Landlord and tenant are collaborative and willing to come to agreement but need help working out details or a plan for payment arrangements

Benefits of Mediation

- Gives the parties a sense of control over the outcome of their dispute
- Outcomes reached collaboratively are more lasting/more adhered to
- Gives parties a chance to speak and be listened to – which often has not happened before
- It allows for creative, flexible outcomes
- It is usually cheaper and more timely than legal action and can happen preventatively as well as reactively
- It helps build or retain relationships, especially important to ongoing ones

Community Resource: COVID Eviction Legal Help Project



There is free legal help available:

- If you have received a notice from your landlord saying that you need to move out
- If you own a 2- or 3-family home and your tenant can't pay the rent

The COVID Eviction Legal Help Project **gives free legal help to low-income** tenants and to low-income owner-occupants of 2 or 3-family homes.

To be eligible for **CELHP** free legal help:

- Your household income must be **under 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines**.
- The eviction must be related to COVID.

CELHP also offers **low cost legal help** to low-income owner-occupants of 2 or 3-family homes with incomes above the CELHP limit for free legal help.



Visit <https://evictionlegalhelp.org/> to search for free or low cost legal help



- [Eviction Diversion Program](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-eviction-diversion-initiative-overview)**
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-eviction-diversion-initiative-overview>
- [Local Community Mediation Center](https://www.resolutionma.org/housing)**
<https://www.resolutionma.org/housing>
- [Community Mediation Programs](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/eviction-diversion-initiative-legal-services-and-mediation#faq:-learn-how-community-mediation-can-help-tenants-stay-in-their-homes-)**
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/eviction-diversion-initiative-legal-services-and-mediation#faq:-learn-how-community-mediation-can-help-tenants-stay-in-their-homes->
- [COVID Eviction Legal Help Project](https://evictionlegalhelp.org/)**
<https://evictionlegalhelp.org/>