

DATE: June 14, 2021

PROCEDURAL MEMORANDUM #001-21

SUBJECT: Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) Categorical Income Eligibility Determination

TO: County ERAP Providers

FROM: Cathy Buhrig
Director
Bureau of Policy

PURPOSE

To inform county ERAP providers of the requirements to establish categorical income eligibility for applicant households.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

The United States Treasury published guidance in the Frequently Asked Questions dated May 7, 2021, pertaining to the use of categorical eligibility to document and verify income. If an applicant's household income has been verified to be at or below 80 percent of the area median income for ERA1, or if an applicant's household has been verified as a low-income family as defined in Section 3(b) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a(b)) for ERA2, in connection with another local, state, or federal government assistance program, grantees are permitted to rely on a determination letter from the government agency that verified the applicant's household income or status as a low-income family, provided that the determination for such program was made on or after January 1, 2020. Given the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, grantees may be flexible as to the particular form of documentation they require, including by permitting photocopies or digital photographs of documents, e-mails, or attestations from employers, landlords, caseworkers, or others with knowledge of the household's circumstances.

Based on this guidance, the Department of Human Services (DHS) has determined that a household may submit and the ERAP agency shall accept as income verification current eligibility determination notices for the following DHS programs with a determination date of January 01, 2020 or later: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid or Medical Assistance (MA) or Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

DHS and County Assistance Offices are unable to accommodate extensive ERAP agency requests for eligibility determination letters.

ERAP agencies may leverage use of “Yes” results from the COMPASS Benefit Search page to establish categorical income eligibility provided that the applicant has signed an authorization for release of information. A “Yes” indicator for benefits is sufficient verification that DHS has established income eligibility at an income limit below the 80 percent area median income after January 1, 2020.

ERAP agencies may log into COMPASS as a Service Provider to access the Benefits Search Page and request a benefit look up. Users can perform a search for up to five individuals per search. Use the “Reset” button to perform another search for up to five persons as needed. Please remember to log out after completing searches. (See attached COMPASS instructions for Benefit Search.)

NEXT STEPS

1. Share and review this Procedural Memo with appropriate staff.
2. Review the attached COMPASS Benefit Search Instructions.
3. Direct questions regarding this Procedural Memo to RA-PWERAPOIM@pa.gov.
4. This Procedural Memo is in effect until further notice.

ATTACHMENT

ERAP Benefit Search Instructions