

# McLennan County Emergency Rental Assistance Program

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Q: What is the McLennan County Emergency Rental Assistance Program?

A: The McLennan County Rental Assistance Program (MCERA) aids with rent payments to help families-in-crisis who have been affected by reduction in income, incurred significant costs, other financial hardship due, directly or indirectly, to COVID-19. To avoid an eviction, the MCERA program will assist families with rental assistance limited to 12 months. Assistance includes help for families who qualify and meet income guidelines established by the U. S. Department of the Treasury with rental and utility assistance to prevent and avoid evictions and homelessness

### 2. Q: How am I eligible to apply?

A: "Eligible household" means a household of 1 or more individuals who are obligated to pay rent on a residential dwelling. Household must reside in McLennan County and demonstrate a financial need through the following:

- Documentation of financial hardship (ex: unemployment, written statement explaining reduction in income, incurred significant costs, other financial hardship due, directly or indirectly, to COVID-19.);
- Demonstrate risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability and;
- The program qualifies your income at the time of the application and provide required documents such as: identification, proof of income, documentation of need, etc.

### 3. Q: How much assistance is available for my family?

A: Financial assistance to eligible households, including the payment of

- Rent;
- Rental arrears;
- Utilities and home energy cost;
- Utilities and home energy costs arrears; and
- Full payment of arrears as March 13, 2020 are allowed and limited up to 12 months payable to landlord and/or utility companies (excluding telephone and cable).
- Prospective payments are limited to three months at a time not to exceed 12 months payable to landlord and/or utility companies (excluding telephone and cable). You must reapply every three months for additional assistance.
- Utility assistance includes electricity, gas, water and sewer.
- Internet services provided to the rental unit.

### 4. Q: I need assistance paying my mortgage. Can I apply for assistance through this program?

A: No, you are not eligible to participate. This program is designed to provide relief to tenants who have past due rent. Please call 2-1-1 to see if there are other resources to help you.

### 5. Q: Does my landlord have to agree to participate in this program?

A: No. At least three attempts must be made by phone or email over a 10 calendar-day period to request the landlord or utility provider's participation. All efforts must be documented. Payment will then be made directly to the eligible household to pay the landlord or utility provider if there is no response. The head of household shall within thirty (30) days provide a receipt of payment to the landlord or utility provider. A household that fails to provide said receipt shall repay the amount of the grant in full to the County under the terms of the program agreement.

### 6. Q: Do I have to pay the money back?

A: No. The assistance is a grant and there are no recapture terms.

### 7. Q: I am receiving unemployment. Will this count as income?

A: Yes, any cash or cash-equivalent payments you are receiving on a regular basis, such as unemployment or TANF count as income. A cash equivalent payment is something you can spend

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anywhere, like a pre-paid debit card.

**8. Q: I receive SNAP/food stamps. Will this count as income?**

**A:** No. Any non-cash benefits like SNAP do not count as income. Non-cash benefits are benefits you can only use for one purpose, like buying food or medicine.

**9. Q: My only income is Social Security/a pension/payments from my retirement fund. Am I eligible?**

**A:** Yes. If you can provide documentation of a hardship, demonstrate risk of homelessness or housing instability and are within the income guideline, you are eligible.

**10. Q: I have no income right now, but I am looking for a job. Can I still get help?**

**A:** Yes. If you can demonstrate you are at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability and provide documentation of financial hardship, you are eligible.

**11. Q: I had to leave my job/reduce my work hours because I couldn't find childcare. Am I eligible?**

**A:** Yes. If you can document your child's care provider/school closed and you had to leave your job or reduce your hours to care for them, you are eligible for this program.

**12. Q: I left my job because I am a medically high-risk person. Am I eligible?**

**A:** Yes. If you experienced financial hardship due, directly or indirectly, to COVID-19 and meet the criteria you are eligible.

**13. Q: I can't afford a rental unit on my own anymore, can I find a roommate to move in with me to share the expenses?**

**A:** Yes, at least one or more individuals in the household need to meet the eligibility criteria.

**14. Q: How long is the process?**

**A:** Our goal is to process applications and issue payment within 14 business days. However, processing time may be extended if you are unable to provide the necessary documentation.

**15. Q: I have a Housing Choice Voucher. Am I eligible for the program?**

**A:** Yes. An eligible household may receive MCERA assistance for the tenant-owed portion of rent or utilities that is not subsidized.

**16. Q: Can you pay for a room or hotel?**

**A:** No, you must be leasing a complete rental unit and provide a copy of the signed lease or utility bill and a letter from the landlord showing delinquency.

**17. Q: Why can't I live outside McLennan County?**

**A:** McLennan County received funding from the U.S. Department of Treasury. Therefore, we cannot cross jurisdictions.

**18. Q: How do I know if I live within McLennan County?**

**A:** Look up your address on <https://propaccess.trueautomation.com/clientDB/?cid=20>

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**19. Q: Do you provide the rental assistance funds directly to me?**

A: At least three attempts must be made by phone or email over a 10 calendar-day period to request the landlord or utility provider's participation. All efforts must be documented. Payment will then be made directly to the eligible household to pay the landlord or utility provider if there is no response. The head of household shall within thirty (30) days provide a receipt of payment to the landlord or utility provider. A household that fails to provide said receipt shall repay the amount of the grant in full to the County under the terms of the program agreement.

**20. Q: Can I, as a landlord, apply on behalf of my tenant?**

A: Yes, an applicant for rental assistance may be submitted by a landlord on behalf of the eligible household. A landlord must provide written consent from the tenant in order to submit an application on behalf of the household.