



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - HOPE PROGRAM APPLICANT

### How do I qualify for rent and utility assistance from the HOPE Program?

Low-income renters are eligible for rent and utility assistance from the HOPE Program. To qualify for assistance, you must meet all of the following requirements:

- You rent your place of residence.
- You have missed or been late on a rent payment since April 1, 2020, or been faced with homelessness or possible eviction.
- You have lost income or been unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, or experienced significant costs or financial hardship from the pandemic.
- You have a household income that is less than 80% of the area median income for the county where you live. You can check your county's area median income using the [HUD 2021 Income Limits Documentation System](#) calculation tool.
- You live in one of the 88 counties that the HOPE Program serves.
  - If you live in the following counties, you will need to apply to your local program: Buncombe, Cabarrus, Cumberland, Durham, Forsyth, Gaston, Guilford, Johnston, Mecklenburg, New Hanover, Union, and Wake. You can find contact information on the [HOPE Program website](#).
  - If you are a recognized member of one of the following tribes, you will be served by your tribal government's rent and utility assistance program: Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians, Coharie Tribe, Haliwa-Saponi Tribe, Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina and Waccamaw-Siouan Tribe.

### How do I apply? What if I don't have access to the internet?

You can apply online by going to [www.hope.nc.gov](http://www.hope.nc.gov). You can use your smartphone, tablet or computer. If you don't have access to the internet, you can contact the HOPE Program Call Center at **(888) 9ASK-HOPE** or **(888) 927-5467** to apply by phone. You can also contact the Call Center if you have questions about completing your online application.

### What do I need to apply?

A head of household must apply for assistance from the HOPE Program. A head of household is defined as a person that can make decisions on behalf of the entire household. That person needs to gather the following information in order to complete the application:

- household income, including all income from all members of your household,
- lease or other proof of a rental relationship between the household and a landlord to show

that you are a renter. If you do not have a lease, you may instead submit:

- A completed [Lease Summary form](#), which must be signed by your landlord, or
  - A written statement from your landlord with your name, explaining how much your lease is a month, your rent address, how many months late you are, and when the lease ends, or
  - Proof of payment such as a check or bank statement showing a deposit to your landlord for the amount of the rent.
- your landlord's name, email address and other contact information. Having your landlord's email address is essential to providing rent assistance,
  - the most recent utility bill for any essential utility (electricity, water, wastewater/sewer, or natural gas/heating fuel) for which you need assistance,
  - the email address, first name, and last name used to apply for HOPE Program assistance if you have previously applied.

### **Can I apply for more HOPE benefits if I received rent and/or utility assistance from the HOPE Program before? What if I received assistance from another program?**

You can receive assistance from the HOPE Program if you received assistance in the first phase of the program as long as you continue to need assistance and otherwise qualify according to the eligibility requirements. You should be aware that assistance provided during the first phase of the program will count toward the 15-month maximum assistance that you may receive.

You may be eligible for assistance from the HOPE Program if you received assistance from another source, but you must disclose that assistance to your assigned HOPE Specialist, since the HOPE Program may not duplicate other assistance that you have already received.

### **I currently receive subsidized housing assistance from my local housing authority, am I eligible for rent assistance?**

Yes, applicants receiving subsidized or assisted housing assistance are eligible. Assisted housing applicants are eligible for up to 15 months of total back-owed rental assistance. Per federal guidance, these applicants are not eligible for future rent payments.

### **If I applied or received assistance from the HOPE Program, do I need to continue paying my rent or utilities?**

Yes, applicants remain responsible for any amount owed or agreed to that is not covered by the assistance provided by the HOPE Program. In cases in which the HOPE assistance does not cover the total rent or utilities owed, applicants must work with their landlords or utility providers to arrange a payment plan or other means to meet their obligations.

## **My family has lost income due to the pandemic and we have fallen behind on utilities, but we have kept up with rent. Can my family still qualify for rent and utility assistance?**

Yes, being late on an essential utility (electricity, water, wastewater/sewer, or natural gas/heating fuel) is enough to qualify for rent and utility assistance if you meet the other eligibility criteria. For this phase of the HOPE Program, you do not have to be behind on your rent to qualify for rent assistance but you must request and be eligible for rent assistance to also receive utility assistance. Utility assistance is not offered as a standalone award.

## **How much of my rent will the HOPE Program pay?**

The HOPE Program will pay the monthly rent you owe to your landlord, up to 130% of the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in your county. You can find the county fair market rent limits using the [2021 HUD Fair Market Rent Documentation System](#). Eligible applicants can receive up to 15 months of rent assistance, which includes up to 12 months of past-due rent. Rent assistance provided during the first phase of the HOPE Program counts towards the total 15 months of total rent assistance that an applicant can receive.

The program also pays three months of future rent at a time, with 15 months being the maximum amount assistance the program can provide in total. If the applicant has not exhausted 15 months of rent assistance, and funds are available, then an applicant may apply for additional rounds of rent assistance if they still require rent assistance. Federal grant guidance requires that applicants reapply and requalify every three months to ensure that the applicant continues to qualify for assistance.

## **What kind of utilities can I get help to pay? How much will the HOPE Program pay?**

The HOPE Program provides utility assistance for electricity, water, sewer/wastewater, natural gas and heating fuel. You will need to upload your most recent utility bill for any utility that you need help paying. Assistance is available for past-due essential utilities, which may not exceed the following amounts:

- Electricity: up to \$1,020
- Natural gas, propane or heating oil: up to \$270
- Water: up to \$210
- Wastewater: up to \$240

Applicants that continue to have a rent and utility assistance need may reapply to receive utility assistance at a later date, if program funds remain. Utility assistance will be paid directly to the utility provider on behalf of the applicant.

## What are the steps for getting assistance?

These are steps for getting assistance from the HOPE Program:

### 1. Application

You should complete the online application and upload all required documents or apply by phone and provide documents as instructed by the HOPE Program helpline.

### 2. Eligibility Review

Your application and documents will be reviewed by the HOPE Program to determine if your household is eligible for assistance. If your household is not eligible, you will be informed by the program the reason that you are not eligible.

### 3. Award

If you are found to be eligible, the amount of your award will be calculated and you will be notified of the amount and types of awards that your household can receive.

### 4. Agreements

In order to receive assistance, you and your landlord must enter into an agreement in order for the awards to be paid. Both you and your landlord must sign the Landlord and Tenant Agreement and your landlord must provide a W-9 for the award to move to payment. All of these documents will be provided through e-mail and are signed electronically.

### 5. Payment

Once all required agreements and landlord W-9s are signed and provided to the HOPE Program, the award will move to payment. Failure to respond and complete the required documents within 21 days of receiving them will result in your award being canceled. Therefore, it is important that you check your e-mail frequently and respond quickly in order to obtain assistance.

## I would like someone I trust to help me apply for the HOPE Program. Is that permitted?

Yes, you may allow someone who you trust to help you with your application process. In order for the HOPE Program to be able to share sensitive information with the person that you would like to help you, you should complete the [Communication Designee Form](#) and upload the form with your application.

If you would like for someone to be able to act on your behalf, you should upload a signed [Power of Attorney Form](#) that names the person that is authorized to act on your behalf.

You can designate a co-applicant (co-head of household) that lives in the household with you to make decisions on behalf of the household when you apply or reapply for assistance without needing a communication designee form.

10.18.2021