



## City of Santa Monica COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### UPDATED QUESTIONS:

- 1. I applied for the Santa Monica COVID-19 Rental Assistance Program, when will I know if I was selected to move forward in the process?**
  - a. The City of Santa Monica will be generating a lottery in August. Applicants who are selected through the lottery will be contacted by St Joseph Center regarding next steps by the end of August.
  
- 2. How will I be contacted regarding the status of my application?**
  - a. St Joseph Center will be contacting you by email. If you did not list an email address in your application, they will be contacting you by phone.
  
- 3. If I was selected to receive assistance what do I need to do next?**
  - a. Application will be reviewed for eligibility/completeness by St Joseph Center staff. Be ready to provide any missing documentation if it is requested of you.
  
- 4. If I was selected for assistance, when will my rent be paid?**
  - a. This program follows the City's Eviction Moratorium timeline. The moratorium is scheduled to expire on September 30, 2020 for residential tenants. The rental assistance may be applied towards rents that become due after the moratorium expires and is intended to prevent evictions that may occur immediately after the moratorium is lifted.
  
- 5. What do I do if I cannot pay my rent in the meantime?**
  - a. The City's eviction moratorium has been extended until September 30, 2020. If you cannot pay rent, notify your landlord that you cannot pay rent due to the pandemic. As part of the eviction moratorium, tenants will have up to 12 months *after* the moratorium expires to pay back-owed rents accrued during the moratorium period. Tenants cannot be evicted during the 12-month period for nonpayment of such back-owed rent. For more information on the moratorium, including how to notify your landlord, visit: <https://www.santamonica.gov/coronavirus-eviction-moratorium>
  
- 6. How much rent will be covered if I was selected to receive assistance?**
  - a. Selected applicants can be covered for up to 3 months' rent or \$5,000 dollars; whichever is less.
  
- 7. Will I get the money directly or will the money go to my landlord?**
  - a. Applicants will not receive money directly. Payments are to be made to landlords on the tenants' behalf.
  
- 8. What if my landlord does not accept third party rent payments? Or, what if my landlord refuses to submit the W-9 required by this program in order to process the rent payment?**
  - a. **Santa Monica Municipal Code § 4.28.030** says that landlords cannot "refuse to rent or lease a housing accommodation ... or otherwise deny to or withhold from any person or



persons, a housing accommodation" based on the source of the income. If you are a qualified renter and an owner is refusing to rent to you because of your income source, contact the [City Attorney's Office, \(310\) 458-8336, consumer.mailbox@smgov.net](mailto:consumer.mailbox@smgov.net)

**9. Will there be another lottery in the future if I did not get selected?**

- a. Another rental assistance lottery has not been determined at this time. If an opportunity for more rental assistance presents itself, the City will announce it.

**10. What if I want to provide feedback regarding the emergency rental assistance program process?**

- a. To provide the City of Santa Monica feedback on the Emergency Rental Assistance Program please call **310-450-2200 x 5771** or [HumanServices.Mailbox@SMGOV.NET](mailto:HumanServices.Mailbox@SMGOV.NET)

**GENERAL ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS:**

**11. I would like to receive rental assistance. Am I eligible?** To determine if you are eligible, please visit: <https://www.santamonica.gov/coronavirus-renthelp> or email St Joseph Center (SJC) at: [SaMoRentHelp@StJosephCtr.org](mailto:SaMoRentHelp@StJosephCtr.org)

**a. Eligible applicants must:**

- i. Currently reside in a rental unit in Santa Monica
- ii. Provide proof of loss of income or increase in expenses related to COVID-19, which makes you unable to pay rent
- iii. Qualify as a low-income household (as of last 30 days)
- iv. Not be enrolled in the City's Preserving Our Diversity program or any rental housing voucher program (Section 8)

**12. Can I apply if I do not live in Santa Monica?**

- a. No. This program is for Santa Monica residents only. If you live outside of Santa Monica, we encourage you to seek rental assistance opportunities through the Los Angeles County COVID-19 website.

**13. I live in a Community Corporation of Santa Monica (CCSM) affordable housing unit, do I qualify for this program?**

- a. Living in CCSM housing does not disqualify you; however, if you also receive a rent subsidy through the Santa Monica Housing Authority, you would not be eligible to apply.

**14. What if I can't find or provide a copy of my lease agreement?**

- a. The following documentation may also be accepted in place of a lease agreement: regular payment receipts to the owner or leaseholder (including money orders, bank statements showing a regular withdraw, cancelled checks, or a Venmo statement) **AND** at least one of the following: a letter, utility statement, bill, ID or written statement for anyone in the primary household that has the unit address.

**15. What if I can't provide all the documentation that is required?**

- a. If you can't provide the required documentation, explain why in the application. Missing documentation may cause your application to be rejected or your payment to be delayed. You will be contacted by St Joseph Center regarding any missing or incomplete information.



**16. I am on a lease with others (i.e. roommates, spouse, family members). Can each of us apply for rental assistance?**

- a. No. Applicants in this situation should submit one (1) application that includes the income information for all household members. Multiple applications from the same address will not be accepted.

**17. I am a homeowner who has been affected by COVID-19. Can I apply?**

- i. No. Currently, this program is only available for rent assistance (not homeowners).

**18. I do not have a computer. Can I submit a paper application?**

- i. Yes, you can pick up and drop off your application at Virginia Avenue Park 2200 Virginia Avenue Santa Monica 90404

**19. I am having trouble filling out the online application. Where can I get help?**

- a. If you do not have friends or family that can assist you, please contact St Joseph Center at 323-542-2084.

**20. Is the application available in languages besides English?**

- a. The paper application is available in English and Spanish. The online version of the application allows you to select from additional languages when you register for an account.

**21. What if I'm undocumented, can I still apply?**

- a. Yes. You can apply regardless of immigration status. The application does not ask for information regarding citizenship status.

**22. Is my information confidential?**

- a. Yes. Your information is protected and will only be used by the City of Santa Monica and St Joseph Center for purposes related to the rental assistance program.

**23. Does this program qualify for Public Charge?**

- a. No. This program does not count against the Public Charge rule.

**24. What do you consider as income?**

- a. Income includes salaries and wages, tips, benefits, profits from operating your business. Include gross income earned before taxes from wages, unemployment compensation, alimony, child support, investment income, pension, retirement, social security, and any other income sources. If you have no income, you will indicate this on the application. For additional questions reach out to St Joseph Center.

**25. Before the coronavirus crisis I would not have qualified because I made too much, but my income has decreased significantly. Do I qualify?**

- a. You may qualify. We will take your household's income from the past 30 days and multiply that over the 12-month period to determine if it exceeds the Income Limits for your household size. You may have been above the low to moderate income threshold pre-COVID-19 and now qualify based on your income from the past 30 days.



**26. Is the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation \$600 per week that was added to individuals collecting Regular Unemployment Compensation considered income?**

- a. Yes. This is a benefit and therefore considered income. Please include this additional \$600 in your income sources in your application and benefit supporting documentation.

**27. I have savings of \$10,000, but I have set this money aside for my children's schooling. Does that mean I am not low income? Will this disqualify me from the program?**

- a. We will not count the actual value of your savings as income. For savings greater than \$5,000, only 6% of your savings, will be imputed and counted as household income. We will add the imputed income amount to your household income and that total may not exceed the Income Limits based on your household size. The Income Limit chart is included in the application.

**28. I work in the cash economy and do not have paystubs. How do I show proof of income?**

- a. Provide any documentation that demonstrates loss of income. See questions 14.

### **Landlord Related Questions:**

**29. Can payment be sent to me or does it have to be paid directly to my landlord?**

- a. This is not a cash-assistance program. Payments will be made directly to landlords or management companies and not the applicant.

**30. Will my landlord be contacted to verify my application?**

- a. Landlords and or management companies will be asked to provide a W-9 in order to process payment of rent on the applicant's behalf only *after* the applicant has been selected by lottery.

### **PAYMENT & PROCESSING:**

**31. How much money can I receive, and will I be able to use it to pay past due rent?**

- a. Eligible households that are selected by lottery will receive up to three (3) months of rental assistance for a maximum of \$5,000 per household. Payments will be made directly to landlord/property management agent or company and can only be applied to upcoming monthly rent payments. Assistance cannot be used to cover deferred rent.

**32. Will I have to pay the assistance back?**

- a. No, this program is a grant. Repayment is not required unless the application upon which you were awarded assistance is found to be false or fraudulent.

**33. Whose application will you review first? Is it first come-first served basis?**

- a. Applications will NOT be processed on a first come-first served basis. The City will be doing a randomized lottery of completed and eligible applicants after the submission window closes on July 17<sup>th</sup>.



**34. What If I cannot submit before noon on July 17, 2020? Will you reopen the program?**

- a. It will depend on availability of funding after this first round of applications. If you miss the July 17<sup>th</sup> cutoff date, you will not be considered for rental assistance at this time. The City will advise the public if the program re-opens.

**35. When will I know if I was selected for the lottery?**

- a. When an applicant is selected through the lottery, St Joseph Center will contact the applicant regarding next steps.

**36. If my rent for three months is less than \$5,000, can I still receive the maximum payment of \$5,000?**

- a. No. The assistance provided is capped at the equivalent of three months rent OR \$5,000, whichever is less. For example, if a qualified household's monthly rent is \$1,200, that household would be eligible for \$3,600 in rent payment. If the household's rent is \$2,000, that household would be eligible for \$5,000 in rent payment (that would be paid directly to the landlord).

**37. If my rent is more than the maximum allowable limit of \$5,000, can I receive my full rental amount?**

- a. No. If an applicant is eligible for the maximum benefit (\$5,000), the applicant would only receive \$5,000 to be paid to their landlord on their behalf.

**38. What if I owe partial rent for past months?**

- a. This program does not help applicants pay back-rent; it is for upcoming rent only.

**39. If I am approved, how quickly can I receive assistance?**

- a. If approved for assistance, you and your landlord will be notified that the City will be paying your upcoming rent and reminding the landlord that they cannot take eviction action against you for nonpayment of rent. Payments in the form of checks will be paid directly to your landlord/property management agent or company.

**40. How will I know how many months of rental assistance I qualify for under this program?**

- a. All applicants are eligible to receive rental support for up to 3 months rent or \$5,000, whichever is less. Amount will be determined by the City based on the information provided in the application. St Joseph Center will notify you of your award after the lottery closes.