

CHAPTER 41

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION PROGRAM

Authority

N.J.S.A. 52:27C-24, 52:27D-280.

Source and Effective Date

R.1995 d.56, effective February 6, 1995.
See: 26 N.J.R. 4248(a), 27 N.J.R. 483(a).

Executive Order No. 66(1978) Expiration Date

Chapter 41, Homelessness Prevention Program, expires on February 6, 2000.

Chapter Historical Note

Chapter 41, Homelessness Prevention Program, was originally codified in Title 5 as Chapter 12, Homelessness Prevention Program. Chapter 12 was adopted as Emergency New Rule R.1984 d.570, effective November 29, 1984 (to expire January 28, 1985). See: 16 N.J.R. 3497(a). Chapter 12 was readopted as R.1985 d.74, effective January 29, 1985. See: 16 N.J.R. 3497(a), 17 N.J.R. 577(b).

Pursuant to Executive Order No. 66(1978), Chapter 12, Homelessness Prevention Program, was readopted as R.1990 d.62, effective December 27, 1989. See: 21 N.J.R. 2845(a), 22 N.J.R. 336(b).

Pursuant to Executive Order No. 66(1978), Chapter 12, Homelessness Prevention Program, expired on December 27, 1994, and subsequently was adopted as new rules by R.1995 d.56, effective February 6, 1995. See: 26 N.J.R. 4248(a), 27 N.J.R. 483(a).

Pursuant to Reorganization Plan No. 002-1998, Chapter 12, Homelessness Prevention Program, was recodified as N.J.A.C. 5:41, effective July 1, 1998. See: 30 N.J.R. 1347(a), 30 N.J.R. 2644(a).

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SUBCHAPTER 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

5:41-1.1 Title; purpose

(a) The regulations in this chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Homeless Prevention Program Regulations".

(b) The purpose of these regulations is to implement the "Prevention of Homelessness Act (1984)" and, in so doing, to provide temporary assistance to persons who are homeless, or face imminent loss of their homes by eviction or foreclosure, because they are without adequate funds for reasons beyond their control.

Amended by R.1988 d.521, effective November 7, 1988.

See: 19 N.J.R. 1777(a), 20 N.J.R. 2752(a).

Added "temporary" to "assistance" in (b).

5:41-1.2 Administration

The Homelessness Prevention Program shall be administered by the Bureau of Housing Services of the Division of Housing and Development.

SUBCHAPTER 2. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

5:41-2.1 Eligibility

(a) To be eligible for assistance under the Homelessness Prevention Program, a person or household must be either homeless or in imminent danger of losing their home as a result of eviction for non-payment of rent, or mortgage foreclosure, or some other cause which the Bureau of Housing Services determines to be comparable.

1. A person shall be deemed homeless if he involuntarily is without a place of residence for reasons beyond his control.

2. A person shall be deemed to be in imminent danger of losing his home if he is unable to make rental or mortgage payments for reasons beyond his control and he has been served with a summons and complaint for eviction or for mortgage foreclosure, as the case may be.

3. "Mortgage foreclosure" shall include, without limitation, foreclosure for taxes or other municipal liens. In the case of a tax or other municipal lien foreclosure, a person shall be deemed to be in imminent danger of losing his home if he has been served in any legal manner with notice of foreclosure.

(b) No person or household shall be eligible for assistance if their annualized current income (that is, 52 times current weekly income) exceeds the upper limit of "moderate income" as defined in guidelines published annually by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

(c) No person or household shall be eligible for assistance unless all other available financial resources have first been exhausted. Concealment or transfer of assets to become eligible for assistance shall result in immediate and permanent disqualification.

(d) No person or household having a delinquent loan with the Program or which has caused the Program to forfeit a security deposit shall be eligible for additional assistance unless the Bureau of Housing Services finds that the delinquency or forfeiture was due to a cause that was either beyond the control of the person or household receiving assistance, or constituted a violation of the rights of that person or household by another person, and that the cause of the delinquency or forfeiture is not likely to recur.

(e) No person or household found in any administrative or legal proceeding, in which notice and an opportunity to be heard have been given, to have committed fraud or abuse in another governmental assistance program, including, without limitation, other programs providing rental subsidies, or to have made a false or misleading statement or a material omission in any submission to the Program, shall be eligible for assistance.

(f) No person or household already receiving an equivalent housing subsidy under any other program shall be eligible for assistance.

1. A housing subsidy shall be deemed to be "equivalent" for purposes of this subsection if it provides a level of compensation sufficient to ensure that the recipient is required to spend no more than 30 percent of gross household income on shelter costs.

(g) No person or household determined by the Program to be unlikely to pay shelter costs after the period of assistance has ended shall be eligible for assistance.

1. Program staff will work with each applicant in the preparation of a budget that will be of use in determining the applicant's ability to carry shelter costs.

2. No person or household shall be eligible for assistance with back rent unless they have resided in the housing unit for at least three months prior to falling into arrears.

(h) To be eligible for assistance, a person or household must have experienced an uncompensated loss of income or increase in expenses, for a limited period of time, that are necessarily incurred for the preservation of human life. Applicants must submit documentation verifying that one or more of the following caused the inability to pay housing costs:

1. Loss of employment;
2. Medical disability or emergency;
3. Loss or delay in receipt of other benefits;
4. Natural or man-made disaster;
5. Substantial and permanent change in household composition;

6. Any other condition which, in the judgment of the Bureau of Housing Services, constitutes a severe hardship comparable in its effect to the causes listed in (h)1 through (h)5 above.

(i) Assistance to any person or household facing foreclosure as a result of mortgage or property tax arrearages shall be in the form of a loan which shall be secured by a recorded mortgage.

1. No person or household shall be eligible for a mortgage loan unless the home is an owner-occupied single family dwelling (which may be an attached or detached house or a condominium unit) that shall have been owned and occupied by the applicant for at least one year prior to falling into arrears on the mortgage loan or property taxes.

2. No person or household shall be eligible for a mortgage loan in the event of initiated or ongoing bankruptcy proceedings or in the event that the property is encumbered by more than one mortgage.

3. The total amount of any mortgage loan shall not exceed an amount equal to 600 percent (six times 100 percent) of the monthly "Fair Market Rental" as defined for the Section 8 Existing Program for the region in which the property is located as determined in accordance with guidelines published annually by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Amended by R.1988 d.521, effective November 7, 1988.
See: 19 N.J.R. 1777(a), 20 N.J.R. 2752(a).

Substantially amended.

Amended by R.1990 d.62, effective February 5, 1990.
See: 21 N.J.R. 2845(a), 22 N.J.R. 336(b).

Excluded from mortgage loan eligibility anyone who has filed for bankruptcy; clarified language regarding maximum loans.

Amended by R.1992 d.433, effective November 2, 1992.

See: 23 N.J.R. 3439(a), 24 N.J.R. 4035(a).

Eligibility provisions specified further.

Amended by R.1995 d.56, effective February 6, 1995.

See: 26 N.J.R. 4248(a), 27 N.J.R. 483(a).

Case Notes

Vacating judgment for possession in summary dispossession action for nonpayment of rent was warranted. *Housing Authority of Town of Morristown v. Little*, 135 N.J. 274, 639 A.2d 286 (1994).

Applicant was ineligible for Homelessness Prevention Act assistance because her shelter costs were so great as to be unaffordable after assistance period ended. *T.O. v. Department of Community Affairs*, 96 N.J.A.R.2d (CAF) 63.

Excess income defeated applicant's request for housing benefits under Homeless Prevention Act. *M.R. v. Bureau of Housing Services*, 96 N.J.A.R.2d (CAF) 39.

Homelessness prevention assistance was not available absent a failure of resources beyond applicant's control. *C.N. v. Bureau of Housing Services*, 95 N.J.A.R.2d (CAF) 49.

Assistance under Homelessness Prevention Program was not available absent a failure of resources beyond applicant's control. *Cardiello v. Department of Community Affairs*, 95 N.J.A.R.2d (CAF) 42.

Application for assistance properly denied; petitioner already received assistance and did not demonstrate substantial change that would warrant further assistance. *K.N. v. Department of Community Affairs*, 95 N.J.A.R.2d (CAF) 8.

Petitioner failed to demonstrate that he was without adequate funds; no eligibility for Homelessness Prevention Program assistance. *S.W. v. Homelessness Prevention Program, Housing Div.*, 94 N.J.A.R.2d (CAF) 119.

Assistance under the Homelessness Prevention Program; alleged governmental assistance abuse. *S.P. v. Bureau of Housing Services*, 94 N.J.A.R.2d (CAF) 65.

Single adult male sharing a three bedroom apartment was not eligible for rental assistance pursuant to the Homelessness Prevention Program. *B.T. v. Department of Community Affairs*, 93 N.J.A.R.2d (CAF) 29.

Homeless woman was not eligible for emergency assistance. *A.M. v. Essex County Welfare Div.*, 93 N.J.A.R.2d (DEA) 21.

Failure to pay rent made tenant ineligible for the homeless prevention program. *Lemar v. Department of Community Affairs*, 93 N.J.A.R.2d (CAF) 7.

Absence of imminent danger of losing home precluded temporary housing assistance. *Groux v. New Jersey Dept. of Community Affairs*, 92 N.J.A.R.2d (CAF) 70.

Eligibility for mortgage assistance under Prevention of Homelessness Act. *Hahin v. Bureau of Housing Services, Department of Community Affairs*, 92 N.J.A.R.2d (CAF) 29.

5:41-2.2 Distribution of funding

(a) Funds available to the Homelessness Prevention Program shall be so allocated that funding is available for those now homeless, for those facing homelessness as a result of eviction and for those facing homelessness as a result of foreclosure.

(b) Funds shall be so distributed so that applicants in all regions of the State have equal access to assistance.

5:41-2.3 Levels of assistance

(a) The Homelessness Prevention Program shall apply available funds so as to provide assistance to as many people in need of such assistance as possible. Assistance to any one person or household shall not exceed the minimum amount necessary to obtain habitable lodging or to avoid imminent eviction or foreclosure.

(b) Where there is any reasonable prospect of repayment, funds shall be advanced as a loan rather than as a grant, upon such terms as the Bureau of Housing Services shall consider reasonable and appropriate in light of prevailing interest rates and the applicant's present and future ability to repay.

1. Loans shall be evidenced by a note and, if the applicant owns real property, secured by a mortgage. The form and content of the note and mortgage shall be prescribed by the Bureau of Housing Services.

Case Notes

Rental assistance; apartment larger than applicant needed. *N.J.S.A. 52:27D-280 et seq. B.T. v. Department of Community Affairs*, 93 N.J.A.R.2d (CAF) 29.

5:41-2.4 Period of assistance

(a) No person who has become eligible for permanent rental assistance under the section 8 program of the United States Housing Act of 1937, 42 U.S.C. § 1437(f) (24 C.F.R. § 882.101 et seq.) or for any subsidized housing which he can afford shall continue to receive assistance under the Homelessness Prevention Program once the permanent rental assistance or subsidized housing becomes available.

(b) No person shall continue to receive assistance under the Homelessness Prevention Program for more than six months, nor shall any person receive assistance to pay more than three months' rental arrears, unless the Bureau of Housing Services finds there to be sufficient extenuating circumstances to justify an extension.

(c) A household shall be eligible for assistance under the Homelessness Prevention Program more than once only if the problem causing the situation is not chronic or repetitive in nature.

Amended by R.1986 d.296, effective July 21, 1986.

See: 17 N.J.R. 2939(a), 18 N.J.R. 1453(c).

(c) added.

Amended by R.1988 d.521, effective November 7, 1988.

See: 19 N.J.R. 1777(a), 20 N.J.R. 2752(a).

Added text in (b) " , nor shall any months' rental arrears".

5:41-2.5 Priorities

(a) Inasmuch as all households that apply and are found eligible may not be able to receive assistance due to lack of funds, first consideration shall be given to those most vulnerable in the event of homelessness. Priorities for consideration for assistance among otherwise qualified applicants in the same applicant pool shall be assigned in the following order. However, no person shall be deemed to be entitled to assistance solely by virtue of being in one of the following categories.

1. Households with a person who is found to be disabled or handicapped by a government agency physician or other health professional at time of application;

2. Households with a person who is at least 62 years of age;

3. Victims of domestic violence (A referral from the Division of Youth and Family Services, emergency shelter agency, county welfare agency, or other social agency shall be required.);

4. Households with children which have broken up or face imminent breakup due to homelessness. (A recommendation from the Division of Youth and Family Services, emergency shelter agency, county welfare agency or other social agency shall be required.);

5. Single parent households;

6. Other households with children;

7. All other households.

(b) Preference will be given to households already in sustainable housing.

Amended by R.1986 d.296, effective July 21, 1986.

See: 17 N.J.R. 2939(a), 18 N.J.R. 1453(c).

(a)1 amended; (a)2 through 6 deleted; new (a)3.-7.

Amended by R.1990 d.62, effective February 5, 1990.

See: 21 N.J.R. 2845(a), 22 N.J.R. 336(b).

Clarified that inclusion in a priority category does not confer automatic entitlement to assistance; required handicap or disability to be determined by a health professional at the time of application; made clear a preference for households already in sustainable housing and deleted the preference category of families in which children are to be placed elsewhere because of homelessness.

5:41-2.6 Administrative hearings

(a) Any person aggrieved by any notice, order, action or decision of the Bureau of Housing Services under this chapter may appeal that notice order, action or decision to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing pursuant to the Administration Procedure Act, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 52:14B-1 et seq. and the Uniform Administrative Rules of Practice, N.J.A.C. 1:1-1 et seq.

(b) A request for a hearing must be made in writing within 15 days of the applicant's receipt of the notice or order complained of and must be sent to the Hearing Coordinator, Division of Housing and Development, PO Box 802, Trenton, New Jersey 08625.

New Rule, R.1985 d.74, effective March 4, 1985.

See: 16 N.J.R. 3497(a), 17 N.J.R. 577(b).

Amended by R.1990 d.62, effective February 5, 1990.

See: 21 N.J.R. 2845(a), 22 N.J.R. 336(b).

Corrected CN number in address.

SUBCHAPTER 3. HABITABILITY STANDARDS

5:41-3.1 Compliance with H.U.D. Housing Quality Standards

(a) Any rental housing unit, the rental for which is paid, in whole or in part, with rental assistance received under the Homelessness Prevention Program, shall be in compliance with the Housing Quality Standards of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

(b) The Bureau of Housing Services may allow payment of rental assistance for a unit if the unit can be occupied without any imminent hazard to health or safety and the owner of the unit is proceeding in a reasonable manner to abate any violation of the H.U.D. Housing Quality Standards.