

Governor Phil Murphy

ICYMI: DCA Surpasses Milestone of Disbursing More Than \$200 Million in Federal Emergency Rental Assistance; Ranks Third in the Nation Among State Programs for Assistance Distribution

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Department Also Launches Eviction Prevention Program to Help Even More New Jersey Households in Need Get Assistance

TRENTON – The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) today highlighted that it has reached the milestone of disbursing more than \$200 million in federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funds throughout the state. More than \$232 million in rental relief has been distributed to nearly 26,000 households to date as DCA's Division of Housing and Community Resources continually works to increase the pace of distribution.

Additionally, DCA is announcing the start of the Eviction Prevention Program, which will pay rent arrears and future rent up to a total of 24 months, as well as utility assistance, for low-income, moderate-income, and middle-income households that have experienced an economic impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program is made possible with \$500 million in federal funding for rental assistance and \$250 million in federal funding for utility assistance that was included in legislation (S-3691) Governor Murphy signed into law on August 4, 2021.

U.S. Treasury published a report on the Emergency Rental Assistance Program in June in which it described DCA as a high performer in disbursing rental assistance. The report can be found at: [Emergency Rental Assistance Program | U.S. Department of the Treasury \(https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/emergency-rental-assistance-program\)](https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/emergency-rental-assistance-program). That high rating continued in the July report with DCA's performance near the top among states in terms of overall disbursement and funds disbursed in the month of July. All states must expend 65 percent of the first tranche of ERAP funds by September 30, 2021. U.S. Treasury tracks the amount expended on a monthly basis and, in terms of percentage of funds spent, New Jersey is currently third in the nation among state programs.

"We are proud to be in the top tier of states to get federal emergency rental assistance out, but we know even more needs to be done to help families who have struggled to pay their rent throughout this pandemic," **said Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver, who serves as DCA Commissioner.** "This is why DCA continues to focus on picking up the pace of distributing funds so that as many people as possible can avoid eviction. It is also why we are launching the Eviction Prevention Program, which will help us expand income eligibility to reach even more households in need."

The Eviction Prevention Program will use the same application process and procedures as the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program, which began in March 2021 and is still accepting applications.

As established by the state law, the Eviction Prevention Program may serve renter households up to 120 percent of Area Media Income (AMI) as opposed to the federal maximum of 80 percent of AMI in the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Additionally, the Eviction Prevention Program may provide both rent arrears and future rent

payments for a period up to two years with recertification every six months.

DCA will use one application for both the Eviction Prevention Program and the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program. People who have pending applications with or who have received assistance through the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program do not need to reapply to be considered for the Eviction Prevention Program. For example, if someone applies for and receives the maximum 12 months of assistance through the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program but still needs help, they would be automatically considered for additional rental relief through the Eviction Prevention Program without having to apply.

DCA urges people who have had difficulty paying their rent to apply to the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program and Eviction Prevention Program. They can visit <https://njdca.onlinepha.com/> (<https://njdca.onlinepha.com/>) to get started. Applications can be submitted online with the use of a personal computer, laptop, smartphone, or tablet.

DCA is extending reasonable accommodations on a case-by-case basis to disabled individuals and people who have limited English proficiency. People with questions or who have difficulty accessing the internet should contact DCA's call center at 609-490-4550 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week. Pre-applications may be submitted over the phone by those without internet access.

Landlords may apply for assistance on behalf of a tenant. The landlord must:

- Obtain the signature of the tenant on the application, which may be documented electronically; and
- Must provide documentation of the application to the tenant to notify the tenant that the application has been submitted.

As part of the programs, DCA is encouraging landlords to agree to a reasonable payment plan for any rent arrears and rent not covered by the rental assistance and commit to not filing for eviction for non-payment of rent during the term of the assistance.

In addition to the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program and Eviction Prevention Program, the State introduced critical eviction protections for renter households that have experienced economic hardships during the pandemic. To find out more about current eviction protections available and how to self-certify for these protections, people can visit <https://covid19.nj.gov/renter> (<https://covid19.nj.gov/renter>).

The funding milestone announced today is in addition to the \$91.75 million that DCA distributed to 15,000 households in the first phase of the CVERAP program last year.

DCA offers a wide range of programs and services, including local government management and finance, affordable housing production, fire safety, building safety, community planning and development, and disaster recovery and mitigation.

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