



Homes and Community Renewal

COVID Rent Relief Program

Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor
RuthAnne Visnaukas, Commissioner/CEO



Overview of the Program

In May, the New York State Legislature passed the Emergency Rent Relief Act of 2020 to assist a subset of low-income renters in New York impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) has been charged with administering the COVID Rent Relief Program.

Applicants for the program were required by the legislation to meet all of the following criteria:

- Must be a renter and have a primary residence in New York State;
- Before March 7, 2020 and at the time of application, household income must have been below 80 percent of the Area Median Income, adjusted for household size;
- Before March 7, 2020 and at the time of application, the household must have been “rent burdened,” which is defined as paying more than 30 percent of gross monthly income towards rent; and
- Applicants must have lost income during the period of April 1, 2020 to July 31, 2020.

Additionally, the legislation directed HCR to include cash benefits, including unemployment benefits, in the calculation of applicants’ income. Tenants receiving a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher for their housing costs or that reside in public housing where their rent cannot be more than 30 percent of their income, are also ineligible to receive assistance under the statute.

Program Outreach

From the time this legislation was signed into law in June, the Agency has worked hard to establish and implement this legislative program.

HCR, in partnership with the State’s Office of Information Technology Services and outside vendors, was able to create an online application portal within a month of the law being signed.

In June, the Agency provided members of the Senate and Assembly with detailed presentations prior to the launch of the program. These sessions provided lawmakers an opportunity to learn how their legislation was being put into effect. Similarly, HCR held several public outreach events to community stakeholders to help them understand the program and how they could help their constituents apply for and receive assistance. More than 100 organizations participated in these events.

The Agency also made concerted efforts to reach non-English speaking New Yorkers to ensure they were not passed over during this crisis. The program's online application was available in both English and Spanish, and HCR also provided translated applications in six foreign languages – Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Haitian-Creole, Korean, and Bengali. HCR's website also provided tenants who speak these languages with supplemental materials such as Frequently Asked Questions, attestations, and other program documents. Similarly, applicants were offered the opportunity to fill out a paper application if they lacked access to the internet.

Furthermore, HCR extended the program application period to ensure those most at-risk and rent burdened after losing income due to the pandemic had the opportunity to apply.

Program Status

HCR received nearly 83,000 completed applications online and an additional 11,000 paper applications. All of the online applications were reviewed, and the majority of paper applications have been reviewed.

From the completed pool of applications, HCR received thousands of applications that did not supply all the necessary documentation or were not clearly eligible. Instead of immediately denying these applications, HCR offered tenants the opportunity to submit additional documents. This group of applications required more intensive and specialized case management. All applicants in this group received outreach from HCR. These efforts resulted in the Agency receiving more than 13,000 documents that required additional case management review.

More than 57,000 applicants received denial notices because they were not eligible under the Legislature's criteria established in statute. HCR has established an appeals process for those who believe that their application for assistance was wrongly denied.

To facilitate communication with applicants, HCR also created a call center that was open six days per week during the application period and has been open five days per week since August. The call center has received over 265,000 calls from applicants and landlords, and has made thousands of additional calls to landlords to request necessary tax documentation. The call center can provide assistance to English- and Spanish-speaking residents, and a dedicated "language line" is able to provide assistance for additional foreign language speakers. Since it opened, the average wait time for the call center is under three minutes.

HCR will continue outreach to landlords and applicants to keep them informed of the status of their payments

and remind them of any supplemental documentation being requested to support the payment of their award. their cooperation. We have also communicated with all applicants whose payment is being delayed pending documentation from the landlord.

Summary of Disbursements

Payment Information	Applicants Paid	Program Award Amount
Payments made as of Oct. 28, 2020	9,611	\$23,210,015
Total Pending Payments as of Oct. 28, 2020	5,411	\$16,767,006
GRAND TOTAL PENDING AND ACTUAL	15,022	\$39,977,021

Summary of Disbursements by Month to Date

Month	Payments to Date
August	\$2,919,427
September	\$8,958,766
October	\$11,331,822
Total	\$23,210,015

Data as of 10/28/20

Summary of Disbursements by County to Date

County	Payments to Date	Average Award	Median Award
Albany	\$52,594	\$1,315	\$1,063
Allegany	\$0	NA	NA
Bronx	\$3,911,393	\$2,298	\$1,905
Broome	\$23,304	\$1,013	\$832
Cattaraugus	\$0	NA	NA
Cayuga	\$8,983	\$1,797	\$817
Chautauqua	\$11,149	\$1,239	\$992
Chemung	\$7,032	\$1,406	\$1,616
Chenango	\$0	NA	NA
Clinton	\$3,050	\$3,050	\$3,050
Columbia	\$12,475	\$2,495	\$2,029
Cortland	\$5,500	\$2,750	\$2,750
Delaware	\$0	NA	NA
Dutchess	\$124,661	\$1,979	\$1,849

Erie	\$192,695	\$1,579	\$1,269
Essex	\$0	NA	NA
Franklin	\$0	NA	NA
Fulton	\$3,787	\$1,262	\$1,240
Genesee	\$3,304	\$1,101	\$1,034
Greene	\$2,266	\$1,133	\$1,133
Herkimer	\$436	\$436	\$436
Jefferson	\$6,379	\$911	\$801
Kings	\$5,609,628	\$2,413	\$1,856
Lewis	\$0	NA	NA
Livingston	\$2,600	\$2,600	\$2,600
Madison	\$1,310	\$655	\$655
Monroe	\$212,597	\$1,635	\$1,531
Montgomery	\$3,363	\$1,121	\$980
Nassau	\$613,631	\$3,147	\$2,459
New York	\$3,758,760	\$2,481	\$1,816
Niagara	\$21,838	\$1,365	\$918
Oneida	\$13,531	\$1,230	\$1,188
Onondaga	\$73,200	\$1,408	\$1,253
Ontario	\$6,876	\$1,375	\$1,201
Orange	\$105,928	\$1,709	\$1,224
Orleans	\$612	\$612	\$612
Oswego	\$9,483	\$1,355	\$1,437
Otsego	\$6,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Putnam	\$14,465	\$2,411	\$2,545
Queens	\$6,291,940	\$2,561	\$1,868
Rensselaer	\$32,029	\$1,779	\$1,691
Richmond	\$323,998	\$2,331	\$1,943
Rockland	\$99,573	\$2,620	\$1,883
Saratoga	\$27,839	\$1,547	\$1,227
Schenectady	\$30,671	\$1,917	\$1,969
Schoharie	\$0	NA	NA
Schuyler	\$0	NA	NA
Seneca	\$1,700	\$1,700	\$1,700
St. Lawrence	\$4,496	\$899	\$324
Steuben	\$2,099	\$1,050	\$1,050
Suffolk	\$717,889	\$3,004	\$2,483
Sullivan	\$8,283	\$2,071	\$2,346
Tioga	\$2,200	\$2,200	\$2,200
Tompkins	\$21,718	\$3,620	\$3,940
Ulster	\$49,688	\$1,713	\$1,638
Warren	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Washington	\$919	\$919	\$919

Wayne	\$8,034	\$2,008	\$1,985
Westchester	\$759,596	\$2,490	\$2,094
Wyoming	\$0	NA	NA
Yates	\$1,512	\$1,512	\$1,512
Total	\$23,210,015	\$2,415	\$1,856

Data as of 10/28/20

Summary of Disbursements by Race/Ethnicity

(Self-reported, including non-disclosed)

Race / Ethnicity	Applicants Paid to Date
Amer. Ind., Non-Hispanic	15
Asian, Non-Hispanic	1,352
Black, Non-Hispanic	1,490
Hispanic	2,292
Multirace, Non-Hispanic	166
Other Race, Non-Hispanic	174
Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	12
Undefined	2,081
White, Non-Hispanic	2,029
Total	9,611

Data as of 10/28/20

Summary of Disbursements by AMI

Pre-COVID AMI Band	Applicants Paid to Date	Payments Made to Date
0-30% AMI	2,349	\$6,176,113
30-50% AMI	3,837	\$9,065,370
50-80% AMI	3,425	\$7,968,532
Total	9,611	\$23,210,015

Data as of 10/28/20