

VT State Housing Authority Rental Housing Stabilization Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

These FAQs and answers may be subject to change and will be amended updated as necessary

The Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) Rental Housing Stabilization Program (RHSP) is for funding landlords on behalf of tenants in need of rental arrearage assistance due to COVID-19 to avert tenant eviction. This program will provide the VSHA Payment Standard or the actual amount due for the month(s) being claimed, whichever is less, per household at a single unit who meet eligibility criteria. The goal of this program is to prevent homelessness and to provide housing stability.

1. Who is eligible?

Applications will be processed on a first come first serve basis. Homeless families will be referred to the VT Agency of Human Services.

Landlords are eligible to receive grants on behalf of tenants if the tenant has rent arrears and the unit does not have serious life safety code violations.

Landlord can apply if tenant has not paid rent nor applied for an RHSP grant. The tenant will be notified of the landlord's application and given an opportunity to apply for a grant to preserve the tenancy. If tenant applies, landlord has option of receiving all months due, but must certify and be bound by all program requirements. If tenant fails to apply for a grant within ten working days, landlord will be entitled to receive partial payment of arrears ($\frac{1}{2}$ of past due rent) and will retain the right to evict or proceed with an eviction.

Tenants who are in unsustainable tenancies are eligible for rent arrears. These tenants will be encouraged to move to a sustainable unit and will be eligible for first and last months' rent and security deposit and where necessary rent payments through December 30, 2020.

Households receiving emergency housing benefits from the Department of Children and Families' General Assistance Program since March 1, 2020 may be granted funds to be used for first and last months' rent and security deposit and where necessary rent payments through December 30, 2020. This group will be initially redirected to the Agency of Human Services Office of Economic Opportunity for assistance.

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2. How much will the program pay?

This program will provide payments up to the VSHA Payment Standard or the actual amount of rent arrears due for the month(s) being claimed, whichever is less, for a household at a single unit who meet eligibility criteria.

3. How do I apply?

Apply on-line at the VSHA web site, www.vsha.org by clicking on the COVID 19 Information tab. Fill out the Rental Housing Stabilization Program application for either Tenant or Landlord and submit it as directed. Both the tenant AND the landlord must complete application and certification forms as applicable.

4. Can I get help filling this out online? Can I get a paper copy?

Yes. The applications are printable. If you are unable to fill out the form, please contact the appropriate agency below:

- Tenants call VT Legal Aid – 1-800-889-2047 **or fill out [Legal Help Request Form](#).**
(All tenants eligible)
- Landlords call VT Landlords Association - 802-985-2764 or 888-569-7368 (no membership required)

5. How often can I apply?

Households can apply as often as needed through December 2020 and as long as there is money available in the fund.

6. If a landlord accepts the grant can the tenant still be evicted?

No. The conditions of the grant state that if a landlord accepts the grant payment they must:

- Drop any pending termination of tenancy or pending court case for eviction.
- Qualify the grant as payment in full for all back rent, even if the amount is less than the monthly contract rent.
- Waive all late fees.
- Not evict for nonpayment of rent for the same number of months in the future as the payment covers in the past, or six (6) months, whichever is greater.
- Not to raise the rent before January 1, 2021 or the end of the lease term, whichever is later.
- Make repairs in 30 days so that my unit is not in violation of housing codes.

7. Should I tell my landlord or tenant that I am applying?

Yes. Communication between tenants and landlords is important. Most landlords do not want to lose good tenants and good communication can only help. Also, the landlord will need to certify the amount of the claim by completing a Landlord Certification form.

8. How will the application be processed? How will the landlord get paid?

When both the Tenant Application and Landlord Certification forms are received by VSHA, they will be reviewed by VSHA staff. If approved, VSHA will transfer payment to the

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landlord by direct deposit. No paper checks will be mailed. If denied, the landlord and tenant will be notified by email. If either the landlord or tenant does not have email, then notification will be by First Class mail. Email is strongly encouraged and preferred for both public safety and programmatic efficiency.

9. How long will the program run?

The program will run until the funds are exhausted, the program ends, or December 30, 2020, whichever comes first.

10. Will I have to pay back the money?

No. This is not a loan; it is a grant and will not have to be paid back. Both the landlord and the tenant are certifying the accuracy of the information each provides.

11. Is Lot Rent Eligible?

Yes, if you own a mobile home and rent space in a park.

12. Are Homeowner Association (HOA) Fees Eligible?

Only if the HOA fees are included in the rent amount or if the HOA fee is a separate payment under the terms of a written lease.

13. How long until I find out if my application has been approved?

All decisions will be made within 10 working days of submission of a complete Landlord Certification and Tenant Application. Applicants will be provided 10 working days to appeal administrator's decision. Request for appeals must be in writing via email stating the reason for the appeal. Administrator will respond to appeal within 10 working days via email.

14. Are there special provisions for victims of violence or stalking?

To ensure the safety of tenants, tenants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking may request additional funding to move to another rental unit even if they received rental assistance in the past or another member of their household received rental assistance. The ability to make such a request is available regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

15. Am I protected from discrimination?

VSHA and community partners, as well as landlords, are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin or ethnicity, religion, disability, minor children, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, abuse, sexual assault or stalking, age, receipt of public assistance, or marital status.