

Vermont State Housing Authority

Rental Housing Stabilization Program

Program Summary

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. RHSP guidance and structure is subject change based on availability of funds, and guidance received by State and Federal agencies and community partners.

Eligibility:

Applications will be processed on a first come first serve basis. Homeless families will be referred to 211 and the VT Agency of Human Services. For an application to be complete it must have the following documents:

- Tenant Application
- Landlord Certification
- Landlord W-9
- Landlord Direct Deposit Authorization
- Voided Check or other bank documentation with landlord account and routing number for Direct Deposit

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 (½ of past due rent) and will retain the right to evict or proceed with an eviction. This is the Group 2 option and requires further documentation from the landlord:

- Proof of occupancy for tenant listed on Landlord Certification
- Tenant contact information (phone number, email, mailing address) if known
- Proof of arrearage (ledger)
- Date tenant vacated, or date you became aware of vacancy

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- A statement describing how you learned the tenant had vacated the unit, reason for vacancy if other than rent, if the unit has been re-rented and when (date), and if the unit is in rentable condition.

You must also indicate why you applied under Group 2 rather than Group 1:

- a. I am unable to get in touch with my tenant to apply for full back rent.
- b. I am in the process of selling my building/personal house and need the building to be empty.
- c. I need to get back into my home.
- d. The tenant is damaging the property, but I cannot get a court hearing.
- e. Other reason: _____

Vacancy Loss: Landlords that initially applied for grant funds for rent arrearage under Group 1, but the tenant failed to submit an application, or applied seeking partial payment under Group 2 (but was denied grant funds because the tenant had vacated the unit before the grant claim was processed and paid), or the tenant vacated the rental units after March 1, 2020 owing unpaid rent. VSHA will pay half the amount owed for arrears incurred after March 1, 2020. Arrearages incurred before March 1, 2020 will not be reimbursed.

Money to Move program: Tenants who are in unsustainable tenancies are eligible for rent arrears per program guidelines. 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, or beyond if program extended. Unsustainable may be defined as unaffordable, tenant is a victim of violent crime or abuse, or any reason the unit cannot be maintained by the tenant where finding a new unit would change this pattern. A new application will need to be submitted by the tenant and new landlord for consideration.

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Incomplete applications will be held for 10 days while awaiting any additional or missing certifications and documentation.

Additionally, for landlords to be eligible to receive payment they must certify the following:

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- The dwelling unit for which the tenant will be receiving assistance is operated and maintained in compliance with Vermont Rental Housing Code or will be brought into compliance within 30 days. Units with serious life safety code violations will be referred to Vermont Legal Aid.
- https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/REG_Rental_Housing_Code.pdf
- RHSP payments will not be made on behalf of tenants in units with serious life safety code violations until the repairs are verified as complete.
 - The following are considered life threatening conditions:
 - Any condition that jeopardizes the security of the unit
 - Major plumbing leaks or flooding, waterlogged ceiling or floor in imminent danger of falling
 - Natural or LP gas or fuel oil leaks
 - Any electrical problem or condition that could result in shock or fire
 - Absence of a working heating system when outside temperature is below 60 degrees Fahrenheit.
 - Utilities not in service, including no running hot water
 - Conditions that present the imminent possibility of injury
 - Obstacles that prevent safe entrance or exit from the unit
 - Absence of a functioning toilet in the unit
 - Inoperable smoke detectors
- Monthly rent in excess of VSHA payment standards for the months' rent was in arrears will be waived.
- Late fees will be waived.
- The contract rent will not be increased before January 1, 2021 or the end of the rental term, whichever is later.
- Any pending termination of tenancy, and any pending court case for eviction will be dropped.
- Eviction for cause, and non-payment of rent that arose prior to receipt of this payment will be waived.
- No new action will be taken to evict for nonpayment of rent for a time period equal to the number of months covered by the grant, or up to 6 months, whichever is less.
- New eviction actions will not be taken while a RHSP application is pending with VSHA.

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- For the landlord to receive payment, the landlord must furnish to VSHA an IRS W-9, the VSHA Direct Deposit form and a voided check or other bank account documentation with account and routing number i.e. deposit slip.

Decisions and Appeals

1. All decisions will be made within 10 working days of submission of a **complete application package** (certification from landlord and tenant application). Incomplete applications will maintain their position on the list until a complete application is received, no more than 10 working days.
2. All decisions will be in writing by email or First-Class mail if necessary and conveyed to the tenant and landlord.
3. The Administrator will have an expedited appeals process by which a hearing will be held with anyone designated by the Administrator who was not the original decision-maker or that person's subordinate, and a decision is made within 10 working days of the request for an appeal.
4. Applicants will remain on list until a decision is made.

Applications

On-line applications are strongly encouraged for applications to be processed as quickly as possible. Forms may be filled out online through the online portal at <https://www.vsha.org/rental-housing-stabilization-program/> Paper applications may be printed from the website and sent by mail, but this should be done only when necessary. There are organizations that will help with an online application. For questions or assistance with applications and submittals please contact:

- Tenants call VT Legal Aid – 1-800-889-2047 **or fill out [Legal Help Request Form](#)**. (All tenants are eligible for help).
- Landlords call VT Landlords Association (no membership required) - 802-985-2764 or 888-569-7368
- VSHA -- 802-828-2040 or 802-828-1650 or 802-828-5596

Payments:

All benefits will be paid by Direct Deposit to landlord's bank account. Landlords and tenants may apply as often as needed until December 20, 2020, or the program funds run out, but payments will not exceed the VSHA Payment Standard for the geographic area for the number

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of months of rent needed during the program timeline. Landlords must also certify to the rental amount the tenant is in arrears.

This program will provide payments of back rent 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.

There is not a maximum amount of back rent that can be requested but there are thresholds that will require more documentation for an application to be considered eligible for review. Those thresholds are:

- **Group 1 –**
 - Applications received before 1/1/2019
 - Tenant ledger (required)
 - Statement describing tenancy and reason for extended delinquency (required)
 - Letters (if available/applicable)
 - Copies of legal action (if available/applicable)
 - Applications with arrears greater than \$10,000
 - Tenant ledger (required)
 - any documentation of effort to collect, including court filing
- **Group 2 –**
 - All Group 2 Landlord Certifications
 - Proof of occupancy for tenant listed on Landlord Certification
 - Tenant contact information (phone number, email, mailing address) if known
 - Proof of arrearage (ledger)
 - Date tenant vacated, or date you became aware of vacancy
 - A statement describing how you learned the tenant had vacated the unit, reason for vacancy if other than rent, if the unit has been re-rented and when (date), and if the unit is in rentable condition
- **Group 2.B – (Vacancy loss)**
 - Copy of Rent Ledger
 - Date vacated, or date that the landlord became aware of the vacancy
 - Has the unit been re-rented, if so date (), if not rented is the unit in rentable condition Y or N.
 - Provide Tenant Contact information of new address if known.

To be eligible, landlords and tenants must agree to the program guidelines and certification criteria on the Tenant Application and Landlord Certification respectively and sign the document thereby affirming:

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I hereby declare that the above information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and that I am signing under penalty of perjury under Vermont law. I am signing by electronically entering my name below or providing an original signature. I understand all information, other than demographic, on this form will be shared with my landlord and/or tenant.