

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Child and Family Services Agency



Administrative Issuance: CFSA-17-2

TO: All Staff

FROM: Robert L. Matthews
Deputy Director for Community Partnerships

DATE: January 9, 2017

RE: Rapid Housing Assistance Program (RHAP)

Research shows that inadequate housing is linked to child maltreatment. It threatens the safety and well-being of children and is frequently at the root of child welfare involvement, out-of-home placement, and reunification delays among low-income families. CFSA has put in place the Rapid Housing Assistance Program (RHAP) to provide short term rental assistance to prevent children from entering care, help families reunify when housing is a barrier or allow youth transitioning from foster care (or former foster youth) to establish a stable place to live after emancipation.

This administrative issuance outlines the program requirements for clients and procedures that CFSA staff must follow when referring clients to RHAP. Questions regarding this issuance should be directed to the Community Partnership Administration.

Eligibility

1. Families applying for RHAP must meet the following criteria:
 - a. Have an open/active CFSA in-home or permanency case, however clients may also apply in the following circumstances:
 - i. Child Protection Services (CPS) Investigations or Family Assessment families must first explore whether CPS flexible funds are available before applying for RHAP.
 - ii. Post permanency families may apply for RHAP and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine eligibility.
 - b. Have at least one source of income (employment, SSI, TANF, child support, etc.).
 - c. Be able to contribute at least 10% (and up to 30%, based on an income-based sliding scale) of the rent cost.
2. For youth applying for RHAP, the following criteria apply:
 - a. Youth must be between the ages of 20 and 23
 - i. Youth in care may apply before their 21st birthday however, youth under age 18 should consult their SW prior to submitting an application.
 - ii. Youth age 21 to 23 years old may seek RHAP assistance to fund college room/board costs.
 - b. Must be employed or have some type of monthly income (SSI, child support, etc.) or be attending college full-time with at least a 2.0 (or alternative scale equivalent) GPA.
 - c. Level of contribution by youth will be on a case-by-case basis.



Program Restrictions

RHAP provides limited supports for the following costs under the specified conditions:

RHAP Assistance Type	Duration	Not to Exceed Amount	Frequency
Eviction Prevention	one-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RHAP can pay up to 5 months of overdue rent –or- \$4,500. \$7,500 in cases of disability or families with seven or more children. Approval from the Deputy Director must accompany any special circumstances that fall outside of the established parameters. RHAP payments must resolve the issue and keep the family from being evicted. 	Must wait 6 months from the approval date to reapply
Security Deposit	one-time	RHAP can support security deposits equivalent to no more than two months' rent.	
Rental Assistance	month-to-month, no more than 12 months	Award amounts are determined on a case by case basis and depend on the client's income, family size, and the estimated client contribution.	Must wait 12 months from the last RHAP subsidy payment to reapply

Procedures for Families Applying for RHAP

1. Prior to submitting a RHAP application, the social worker shall consult with the Community Services Division representative on the client's housing needs, including eligibility for other district housing resources.
2. The assigned social worker shall assist the client in completing the [RHAP application](#) in Avoka and shall submit the completed application to the Community Services Division supervisor.
Note: Whenever possible, the CPS social worker shall submit the RHAP application prior to transfer for in-home services and the in-home social worker shall follow through with the process.
3. The housing specialist shall review the application to ensure that the client meets the eligibility criteria outlined above.
4. Once it is determined that the client is eligible for RHAP, an interview with the rapid housing panel will be scheduled with the client and social worker.

Note: Interviews are scheduled every Monday and Wednesday and evening hours are available.

5. If the rapid housing panel determines that RHAP is appropriate for the client, the application shall be sent for review and approval by the Community Services Division supervisor and appropriate deputy director.
 - The housing specialist notifies the social worker of approval status.
 - a. If the client is approved, the housing specialist gives the social worker the RHAP approval letter, which includes a spending plan.
 - b. If the client is denied, the housing specialist gives the social worker a letter outlining the reasons for denial and any next steps necessary for re-application.
6. Once approved, the client shall begin the process of identifying, applying and qualifying for a rental unit.

Note: The client should not move in or sign a lease agreement (initial or renewal) until the RHAP agreement been fully approved.

7. The client shall give the RHAP approval letter and the New Owner/Agent Payment forms to the prospective landlord/sublessor for signature.
8. All documentation shall be returned to the housing specialist so that monthly payments to the landlord can be established.
9. The client must pay the client contribution as outlined in the RHAP spending plan in the approval letter.

Note: The client contribution will slowly increase over the course of the spending plan.

10. If the client breaks the lease or moves to another unit, RHAP funds can be transferred to another unit under the following conditions:
 - a. Any costs associated with breaking the lease or security deposits for a new unit shall be the sole responsibility of the client and will not be covered by RHAP.
 - b. RHAP funds will not be increased if the new rent is higher and will not be extended to cover the new lease period.
 - c. A new awards package will be required to include the new landlord's information and signature and reflect the remaining RHAP subsidy.
 - d. The new landlord must complete the New Owner/Agent Payment forms.
11. The social worker shall continue to work with the client to secure permanent housing while the client is receiving RHAP.

Procedures for Youth Applying for RHAP

1. The assigned social worker or collaborative family support worker (FSW) shall assist the youth in completing the RHAP application and shall submit the completed application to the Office of Youth Empowerment youth aftercare coordinator.
2. In addition to the RHAP application, the following documents are required at the time of application:
 - a. The unofficial transcript and copy of bill for youth in college requesting payment of room and board; or
 - b. A credit report, most recent 3 pay stubs, and if already renting, a copy of the first page of the rental agreement.
3. The youth aftercare coordinator shall review the application to ensure that the youth meets the eligibility criteria outlined above.
4. Once it is determined that the youth is eligible for RHAP, an interview with the youth aftercare coordinator will be scheduled at a time convenient for the youth and social worker.
5. If the youth aftercare coordinator determines that RHAP is appropriate for the youth, the youth aftercare coordinator shall create a spending plan rationale to include the proposed amount of the subsidy.

6. The spending plan rationale shall be sent for review and approval by the OYE administrator and the Deputy Director for Program Operations.
 - The youth aftercare coordinator notifies the social worker or collaborative FSW of the approval status.
 - a. If the youth is approved, the youth aftercare coordinator gives the social worker or collaborative FSW the RHAP approval letter and copy of the spending plan for the youth.
 - b. If the youth is denied, the youth aftercare coordinator gives the social worker or collaborative FSW a letter outlining the reasons for denial and any next steps necessary for re-application.
7. Once approved, the youth gives the RHAP approval letter and the New Owner/Agent Payment forms to the prospective landlord/sublessor for signature.
8. All documentation shall be returned to the youth aftercare coordinator so that payments to the landlord or college can be established.
9. The youth must pay the youth contribution as outlined in the RHAP spending plan.
10. If the youth breaks the lease or moves to another unit, RHAP funds can be transferred to another unit under the following conditions:
 - a. Any costs associated with breaking the lease or security deposits for a new unit shall be the sole responsibility of the youth and will not be covered by RHAP.
 - b. RHAP funds will not be increased if the new rent is higher and will not be extended to cover the new lease period.
 - c. A new awards package will be required to include the new landlord's information and signature and reflect the remaining RHAP subsidy.
 - d. The new landlord must complete the New Owner/Agent Payment forms.