

LACKAWANNA COUNTY
EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

FAQ Updated 3/25/21

1. How can I apply?

Go to <https://relief.lackawannacounty.org>

2. What If I don't have computer access/ability to apply online?

Gather the necessary documents and go to United Neighborhood Centers at 410 Olive St. Scranton or Catholic Social Services at 504 Penn Ave Scranton. They can provide you with a paper application and once you have all the necessary documents, submit the application to the county. If you don't have all the documents, they will tell you what you need to bring back for application submission.

3. Who is eligible for the program?

Anyone who is renting their residence (apartment, house, or mobile home) in Lackawanna County that was financially impacted by the pandemic and is at or under 80% AMI. Applicants can self-certify that they were financially impacted.

Lackawanna County	1 Person	2 Person	3 Person	4 Person	5 Person	6 Person	7 Person	8 Person
80% AMI	\$40,150	\$45,900	\$51,650	\$57,350	\$61,950	\$66,550	\$71,150	\$75,750

4. What qualifies as "financially impacted"?

You will need to provide proof or self-certify that one of these is true (if self-certifying, you may be asked to provide proof):

- You have been laid off.
- Your place of employment has closed.
- You have experienced a reduction in hours of work.
- You must stay home to care for children due to closure of day care and/or school.
- You must stay home to care for children due to distance learning.
- You have lost child or spousal support.
- You have had an increase in expenses due to COVID-19, i.e. childcare, medical bills, etc.
- You have been unable to find employment due to COVID-19.
- You are unwilling or unable to participate in your previous employment due high risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
- You were unable to work due to contracting COVID-19
- You were unable to work due to caring for someone who contracted COVID-19
- Other significant costs (please explain: _____)
- Other financial hardship (please explain: _____)

5. How can I check the status of my application?

Email RentRelief@lackawannacounty.org

6. What documents do I need to submit?

A completed application, photo ID, proof of income - either annual income from 2020 if you have filed taxes (1040, W-2, 1099, etc.) or 60 days proof of current income, and proof of tenancy (lease, rent agreement, or rent receipt).

If you have past due rent, please supply a copy of any notifications you have received from your landlord. If you have past due utilities, please supply a copy of the bill. Your landlord will need to supply a W-9 and Landlord Certification.

7. What can ERAP help with?

ERAP can assist renters in Lackawanna County (all municipalities) with past due rent and past due utility bills for the amounts incurred due after 3/13/2020. In some cases, it can also pay forward rent payments for 3 months. There is a 12-month cap on assistance, so the forward rent is not guaranteed. Past due rent amounts will need to be confirmed with landlord/property owner. Past due utilities will need to be confirmed with the utility company. ERAP cannot pay for food, cable or phone. You do not need to have past due rent or utilities to apply. ERAP can pay 3 months forward rent for qualifying households even if they don't have arrears.

8. I own my home. How Can I get help?

Please go to <https://relief.lackawannacounty.org> and apply through the Mortgage and Utility Assistance Program. This is available to homeowners in Lackawanna County except for the cities of Scranton & Carbondale. These cities will be releasing information on how to apply for their Mortgage Relief programs soon. The funding is restricted to specific municipalities.

9. I'm a landlord. How can I get rental assistance for my tenant?

This program requires proof of income from the tenant as well as self-certification of financial impact due to the pandemic. You can and should assist your tenant with applying, but we will need them to supply income documentation and photo ID, and to sign off on the application.

10. What is the deadline to apply?

At this time there is an application deadline of September 15, 2021, however if funds are exhausted before that time then the program will close sooner.

11. How are applications reviewed/processed?

Applications will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis until all funds are committed, but applicants with income below 50% AMI or who verify current unemployment will be given priority. When an application is submitted in full, meaning complete and will all required documents from both tenant and landlord, assigned county staff will review for eligibility and submit to the finance department for payment.

Once an application is screened for eligibility and the application has all of the required supporting documents, it is deemed complete and undergoes review for approval. Most completed applications take about 10-12 business days to process after all needed documentation has been submitted. A complete application is one that has all required paperwork submitted by the landlord and tenant. Once processed and approved, payments are issued by paper check from Lackawanna County and put in the mail for delivery by the U.S. Postal Service. We are not able to make electronic payments at this time.

12. What if I applied already but I need more help?

You can apply again after 90 days. You will need to submit current income information and proof of past due rent or utilities.

13. What's the maximum amount of assistance?

There is currently no cap on the total amount of assistance, but it is limited to 12 months of total assistance.

14. Is the application for utilities the same application?

Yes, when the tenant completes the application, there is an opportunity to request utility assistance, with or without an applying for rental assistance

15. Are there any penalties if landlords or tenants submit fraudulent information?

Yes, there may be penalties for submission of fraudulent information. Landlords and tenants will be required to attest to the following: "By signing below, I acknowledge and understand that providing a written false statement which I do not believe to be true to the Lackawanna County Department of Human Services is a misdemeanor of the third degree and is punishable as perjury under Title 18, Pa c.s. Section 4904, relating to unsworn falsification to authorities, and that in addition to any other penalty that may be imposed, a person convicted under this section shall be sentenced to pay a fine of at least \$1,000."

16. Can I submit documents electronically?

Yes, electronic submission is acceptable and required for ERAP. If you need to send any initial or follow up documentation, please email to RentRelief@lackawannacounty.org

17. Can late fees or eviction/court fees be included in the request for assistance?

Per the US Treasury, late fees are considered "other expenses related to housing" and are eligible for payment through ERAP, if they were accrued after March 13, 2020 and are related to tenant's past due rent being paid by the program.

18. If I accept assistance from the program for arrears and current month, and their lease is then up in the following month, do I have to renew their lease?

No, using the program does not require you to renew leases for periods past the month for which the current/future assistance is provided.

19. Are we able to submit for tenant portion of a Section 8 or Public Housing recipient?

Yes, tenants in Section 8 subsidized units, public housing, and all other types of subsidized units are eligible to apply. Like all applicants, they will need to meet all program criteria before receiving assistance, and it can only be for the tenant portion of rent/utilities.

20. If a resident does not have a work permit or social security number, can they apply?

Yes. Though some form of government issued or photo ID will be required.

21. What if I am a household member 18 or older and do not receive income?

If you do not receive income, please submit a Zero Income Form.

22. What happens if tenants can't provide all the documents when the application is submitted? Should the incomplete application be submitted to keep my place in line or do I wait until all the documents are submitted?

While an applicant can apply with an incomplete application, the application will not be processed until completed, and there is no holding of place in line. Upon review the applicant will be contacted for the missing documents/information via email. The email provides the applicant with contact information for the Program, advises the applicant of the next steps in the application process, and notifies the applicant of what they must submit in order for their application to be processed. The application will be put on hold until such time that applicant submits all required documentation.

23. Am I eligible for assistance even if I have moved to a different rental unit since the start of the COVID-19 public health emergency?

There is no requirement for the length of stay in a rental unit to be eligible to receive rent relief, however the unit you are applying for must be where you currently reside.