



## HOPE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### HOPE Program Applications Reopening

The NC Housing Opportunities and Prevention of Evictions (HOPE) Program is reopening applications soon. The HOPE Program provides rent and utility bill assistance to renters who have been financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The HOPE Program has been updated since the first open application period. This fact sheet is intended to inform tenants, landlords and utility providers about how the new program works.

### AREAS SERVED

The HOPE Program will serve very low-income renters in 88 North Carolina counties. Very low income is defined as earning less than or equal to 50% of the area median income for the county where the renter lives. The 12 counties listed below received direct federal funding for rent and utility assistance programs. If you live in the one of these counties, you should apply to your local rent and utility assistance program instead of the HOPE Program:

[Buncombe](#)  
[Cabarrus](#)  
[Cumberland](#)  
[Durham](#)

[Forsyth](#)  
[Gaston](#)  
[Guilford](#)  
[Johnston](#)

[Mecklenburg](#)  
[New Hanover](#)  
[Union](#)  
[Wake](#)

Native American tribes also received direct federal funding for rent and utility assistance programs. Recognized members of the following tribes will be served by programs managed by their tribal governments: Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Coharie Tribe, Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe, Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina and Waccamaw-Siouan Tribe.

### ELIGIBILITY

Very low-income renters are eligible for rent and utility assistance from the HOPE Program. To qualify for assistance, you must meet all of the following requirements:

- You rent your place of residence.
- You have missed rent or utility payment(s) sometime since April 1, 2020, or been faced with homelessness or possible eviction.
  - You do not have to be late on your rent when you apply in order to qualify for assistance.
  - Being late on an essential utility sometime since April 1, 2020 qualifies as being at risk of eviction or homelessness.
- You have lost income or been unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, or experienced significant costs or financial hardship from the pandemic.
- You have a household income that is less than 50 percent of the area median income for the county where they live. You can check your county's area median income using the [HUD 2021 Income Limits Documentation System](#) calculation tool.
- You live in one of the 88 counties that the HOPE Program serves. However, if you live in one of the 88 counties and are a recognized member of one of the tribes listed above, you will be served by your

tribal government's rent and utility assistance program.

## **BENEFITS**

### **Rent Assistance**

The new phase of the HOPE Program will pay the monthly rent you owe to your landlord, up to the fair market rent for a 2-bedroom unit in your county. You can find the county fair market rent limits using the [2021 HUD Fair Market Rent Documentation System](#). Rent limits are rounded down to the nearest \$5 for easier calculation.

Eligible applicants may receive up to 12 months of rent assistance, which may include up to nine months of past due rent. Rent assistance provided during the first phase of the HOPE Program counts towards the nine months of past due rent assistance that an applicant can receive.

The program also pays three months of future rent at a time, with 12 months being the maximum amount of assistance the program can provide in total. If the applicant has not exhausted 12 months of rent assistance, and funds are available, then an applicant may apply for additional rounds rent assistance if they still require rent assistance. Federal grant guidance requires that applicants re-apply and re-qualify every three months to ensure that the applicant continues to qualify for assistance.

Rent assistance is paid to the landlord on behalf of the eligible applicant. Landlords that accept this phase of HOPE funds agree to not evict the applicant for non-payment of rent during the period of assistance and for at least 60 days after that period ends.

### **Utility Assistance**

Utility assistance is available to applicants that apply and qualify for rent assistance. Utility-only applications will not be accepted in this phase of the HOPE Program.

The program covers essential utilities, up to a maximum amount. Those utilities and the maximum assistance amounts are as follows:

- Electricity: up to \$510
- Natural gas, propane or heating oil: up to \$135
- Water: up to \$105
- Wastewater: up to \$120

Applicants who reapply for rent assistance may also reapply for utility assistance. Utility assistance will be paid directly to the utility provider on behalf of the applicant. Utility assistance provided during the first phase of the HOPE Program counts towards the 12 months of past due utility assistance that an applicant can receive.

Rent and utility assistance is provided based on the availability of funding.

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