



*Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance*


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**Online Guide Transmittal 2021-49
June 24, 2021**

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff
From:  Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Change Management
Re: Cross Programs: Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

Overview

DTA clients who have **not opted out of** text messaging, and who don't have Heightened Level of Security (HLS), received a text message with information about a new funding resource offered through the Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD). The Department sent text messages to clients on May 24, 2021. The text message was sent in Portuguese, Chinese (Simplified), Spanish, and Vietnamese based on the matching language listed on BEACON. All other clients were sent the text in English. The text message read:

“Need help covering your rent, mortgage or utilities? You may be able to get help through DHCD and new COVID federal funds. For more info, call 2-1-1 or visit www.mass.gov/covidhousinghelp.”

The [Emergency Rental Assistance Program \(ERAP\)](#), is a new resource for tenants and landlords to avoid evictions and maintain household stability throughout the COVID-19 emergency. Those who qualify for DTA programs are considered income eligible for ERAP. Benefits of this program are as follows:

- Renters and landlords may receive up to **12-months** of assistance with past due rent, plus up to **3-months** of future rent. Clients should call 2-1-1 or connect directly with their regional agency through DHCD's

online portal, which can be found [here](#). Additional information can be found here on DHCD's [website](#). As a reminder, 2-1-1 is a confidential and multilingual service.

- Renters may also receive up to \$1,500 for overdue utilities accrued after March 13, 2020.

With the enhanced ERAP benefits, tenants and landlords may be able to access free legal and mediation services offered through the Eviction Diversion Initiative which includes:

- free legal services to eligible tenants and low-income landlords in owner-occupied 2-3 family homes through the COVID Eviction Legal Help Program (CELHP). [More information available here](#).
- free community mediation services to eligible tenants and landlords who need help in reaching agreements that work for both of them. [More information available here](#).

Staff should assist clients who contact DTA and are interested in the rental assistance program, to the best of their ability. Clients should be re-directed to the DHCD online portal where they will be prompted to select their city/town from the drop-down menu to get the contact information of their regional agency and review income-limits for the programs. Once their city/town is selected, the online portal will display:

- name of the regional agency
- address
- telephone number
- link to program details and;
- link to apply (only available in English)

Each client's regional agency will differ as it is dependent upon the client's city/town. Clients attempting to apply or looking to check the status of their application should contact their regional agency directly.

NOTE: When clients apply, they will have to document their income, housing, and other household information. It is very important that staff encourage clients to review their application for ERAP before submitting it to their regional agency and submit a complete application with the required documentation. If an application does not have all the required documents, or accurate contact information, it will take additional time to process.

DHCD has also created new, public-facing guides to help both applicants and service providers gain a better understanding of how to fill out a complete application. These may also be found on the [Public Information Campaign Page](#) and [Service Organizations Training Page](#).

Purpose

The purpose of this Online Guide Transmittal is to advise staff that a text message will be sent to all DTA clients who have **not** blocked the text messaging communication feature, with information about ERAP and procedures when assisting clients who are seeking assistance from DTA.

Questions

If you have any policy or procedural questions, after conferring with the appropriate TAO personnel, please have your Systems Information Specialists or TAO management email them to DTA.Procedural Issues.

Systems issues should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.
