



Guidelines

FOR THE

Treasury Rent Assistance Program (T-RAP) & Treasury Emergency Rental Assistance (TERA) Programs

March 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021

**Updated:
March 22, 2021**

1 Program Basics

1.1 Overview & Staffing

The Treasury Rent Assistance Program (T-RAP) & Treasury Emergency Rent Assistance (TERA) Program is part of the Federal Treasury and Washington State's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Funds are intended to prevent evictions that would contribute to the spread of the virus by paying past due, current due, future rent, and utilities, targeting limited resources to those who have experienced financial hardship due to the COVID-19 outbreak and are at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

- **T-RAP-** Funding from the Federal Treasury, to WA Department of Commerce, to Clark County, WA, to CFTH.
- **TERA-**Funding from the Federal Treasury, to Clark County, WA to CFTH.

Staffing Plan

CFTH staff will seek to spend TERA and T-RAP funding at approximately the same speed. In order to do this CFTH staff will be assigned to provide assistance primarily through one of the funding sources only.

When a supervisor or staff member moves from focusing on one funding source to another, they will use their time sheet to identify the funding type and specific amount of time spent focused on the funding source. Time will be allocated based on 15 minute increments.

1.2 Program Goals

The program goals are:

- ✓ Prevent evictions.
- ✓ Target resources to households who are very low income.

1.3 Program Purpose

The Council for the Homeless will use T-RAP and TERA funding to support very low-income Clark County, WA households whose income has been effected by COVID-19.

1.4 Authorizing Statute and Fund Sources

Federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act.

2 Household Eligibility

There isn't enough funding to assist all of the households who may be eligible for rent assistance under this program. The purpose of the eligibility screening criteria is to target those most likely to become homeless, but for this assistance.

Households must meet all of the initial screening criteria based on the Clark County Prioritization:

- ✓ Income at or below 50% of [Area Median Income](#) (AMI).¹
- ✓ Experiencing a financial hardship directly or indirectly due to the COVID-19 outbreak that threatens the household's ability to pay the costs of the rental property when due.¹
- ✓ At risk of experiencing homelessness or currently experiencing housing instability.¹
- ✓ Have not yet received T-RAP or TERA Housing Assistance.
- ✓ The assistance that will be paid is for a rental in Clark County, WA.

Eligibility criteria must be documented and kept in the household file. *See **Section 3 and the Household Information and Eligibility Form** for more information on documentation standards.*

*United States citizenship is NOT an eligibility requirement of this program.

For the purposes of these programs a household is the person or people that are obligated to pay rent on a residential dwelling and are seeking assistance together. Roommates sharing a residence, but who each have a separate lease, are not considered a household.

Households in informal rental agreements (e.g. staying with family/friends or in a motel long term) are able to receive financial assistance. *See **Section 3.4 Documenting Current Rent and Arrears** for more information on collecting leases and when a lease is unavailable.*

Households residing in subsidized housing are able to receive assistance if funds are not applied to costs that have been or will be reimbursed under any other assistance. If an eligible household receives a monthly federal subsidy (e.g., a Housing Choice Voucher, Public Housing, or Project-Based Rental Assistance) and the tenant rent is adjusted according to changes in income. ¹

Assistance received through this program should not count as a public benefit for the purpose of determining whether someone is considered a public charge. Public charge refers to non-US citizens who have received one or more public benefits, for more than 12 months within any 36-month period. A person considered a public charge is ineligible to become a lawful permanent resident.

Rental assistance provided through this program shall not be regarded as income.¹ Rent assistance received through this program is not regarded as a resource for purposes of determining the eligibility of the household or any member of the household for benefits or assistance, or the amount or extent of benefits or assistance, under any Federal program or under any State or local program financed in whole or in part with Federal funds.¹

¹ U.S. Department of the Treasury specific guidance

3 Documenting Household Eligibility

Household eligibility must be documented using the ***Commerce/Clark County T-RAP & TERA Household Information & Eligibility Form***. This Form and accompanying documentation must be kept in the household HMIS virtual file and will be made available to any funder on demand to confirm grant compliance.

An attestation from the applicant that all information included is correct and complete.¹ See Form for more detailed information on documentation standards for each requirement.

Rent Assistance May be Provided Only Once

If a household received any financial rent assistance from T-RAP **or** TERA funding they are not eligible to receive additional T-RAP or TERA assistance. The funding is limited and CFTH seeks to assist as many households as possible one time.

Utility and Rent Assistance

Only 12 months of arrears assistance consisting of rent, utilities or both may be provided to any household. This means CFTH staff must verify if the household received utility assistance in HMIS. If Utility Assistance was provided, rent assistance may only be provided during the months of utility assistance and up to 12 months total between the two types of assistance.

The most current version of the Form can be found at <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/cares-act-and-state-rent-assistance/>.

3.1 Income

To determine income eligibility, CFTH staff must consider the household's total gross income for calendar year 2020 or the household's current monthly income at the time of application.¹

Gross Income is the amount of income earned before any deductions (such as taxes and health insurance premiums) are made.

Allowable Income Documentation

3.1.1.1 Source Documentation

CFTH staff should collect source documentation for income determinations when possible.¹ This can include paystubs, W-2s or other wage statements, tax filings, bank statements demonstrating regular income, a BVS print out for TANF & ABD (with needed ROI) or an attestation from an employer.¹

An attestation from an employer should include the employees name, employers name, pay amount and frequency, average hours worked per week, amount of any additional compensation.¹

Source documentation can also include a determination letter/statement from another local, state, or federal government assistance program that verified the household income on or after January 1, 2020.¹

Source documentation is flexible and can include photocopies or digital photographs of documents, e-mails, or attestations from employers, landlords, caseworkers, or others with knowledge of the household's circumstances.¹

Electronic signatures for all documentation types are allowable.

3.1.1.2 Written Self-Declaration

Under limited circumstances, a CFTH may rely on a written self-declaration from the household without income source documentation.¹

CFTH will allow for self- declarations when accommodating disabilities, extenuating circumstances related to the pandemic, a lack of technological access, or when a household's income, or a portion of it, is not verifiable due to the impact of COVID-19, has been received in cash, or the household has no qualifying income.¹

When appropriate, CFTH staff may rely on an attestation from a caseworker or other professional with knowledge of a household's circumstances to certify their income eligibility.¹

If relying on a self-declaration to document income eligibility, use the ***T-RAP & TERA Self Declaration Form***.

3.1.1.3 Annualizing Income

Use one of the following calculations to convert the wage into annual income:

- ✓ Hourly wage multiplied by hours worked per week multiplied by 52 weeks.
- ✓ Weekly wage multiplied by 52 weeks.
- ✓ Bi-weekly (every other week) wage multiplied by 26 bi-weekly periods.
- ✓ Semi-monthly wage (twice a month) multiplied by 24 semi-monthly periods.
- ✓ Monthly wage multiplied by 12 months.

3.2 Housing Status

One or more individuals in the household must demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or currently experiencing housing instability. This must be documented and may include:

- ✓ A past due utility notice or eviction notice, or¹
- ✓ Statement from the landlord that verifies the household's housing instability (currently late on rent and/or has rental arrears). Verbal verification is allowable, use Household Information and Eligibility Form, or
- ✓ Self-declaration signed and dated by the household that verifies the applicant's housing instability (currently late on rent and/or has rental arrears, past due utilities, other housing instability details).

3.3 Financial Hardship

One or more individuals in the household must have qualified for unemployment benefits, experienced a reduction in income, incurred significant costs, or experienced other financial hardship due directly or indirectly to COVID-19 that threaten the household's ability to pay the costs of the rental property when due.¹ This must be documented and may include:

- ✓ For documenting unemployment benefits:
 - Copy of most recent payment statement or benefit notice, or,¹
 - Dated mail, fax, email verification, or verbal verification from unemployment administrator that includes amount, or
 - Written self-declaration signed by the applicant that one or more members of the household meets this condition.¹
 - Make a connection between COVID and financial hardship.
- ✓ For documenting all other types of financial hardship:
 - Written self-declaration signed by the applicant that one or more members of the household meets this condition.¹

3.4 Documenting Current Rent and Utility Arrears

Rent Payment Agreement Form

The **Commerce/Clark County T-RAP & TERA Rent Payment Agreement Form** must be completed for households seeking rent assistance. This form and accompanying documentation must be kept in the household HMIS electronic file.

Landlords can initiate T-RAP & TERA financial assistance on behalf of their tenants.¹ Landlords are asked to submit their tenants in the CFTH landlord portal to be placed on the waitlist for assistance through CFTH or a partner agency.

Landlord's initiating assistance must:

1. Provide the tenant with a copy of the Form, and¹
2. Accept any payments received as satisfaction of the tenant's rental obligations, and¹
3. Ensure the tenant signed the Payment Agreement Form at some point in the process.
This can be initiated by the landlord or CFTH.¹ Electronic signatures are allowable.

Please ensure you are using the most current version of the Form by visiting the website at: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/cares-act-and-state-rent-assistance/>

Leases

CFTH staff must collect, if available, a current lease or rental agreement signed by the applicant household and the landlord or sublessor that identifies the unit where the applicant resides and establishes the rental payment amount.¹ The entire lease document doesn't need to be provided as long as the tenant and landlord signatures, payment amounts, and rental address are identified.

A lease/rental agreement is a document that contains the following components:

- ✓ Name of tenant
- ✓ Name of landlord
- ✓ Address of rental property
- ✓ Occupancy (who gets to live at the rental)
- ✓ Term of agreement (lease start and end date)
- ✓ Rent rate and date due
- ✓ Deposits (if any and what for/term)
- ✓ Signature of tenant/date
- ✓ Signature of landlord/date

3.4.2.1 Rental Address

In the absence of a lease or rental agreement (including the required components), documentation of residence may include evidence of paying utilities for the residential unit, an attestation by a landlord who can be identified as the verified owner or management agent of the unit, or other reasonable documentation as determined by the CFTH staff¹ including a written self-declaration of rental location from the household.

3.4.2.2 Rental Payment Amount

In the absence of a lease, evidence of the amount of a rental payment may include bank statements, check stubs, or other documentation that reasonably establishes a pattern of paying rent, a written attestation by a landlord who can be verified as the legitimate owner or management agent of the unit.¹

WHEN THERE IS NO LEASE or RENTAL AGREEMENT:

In cases where the household does not have source documentation of the rental payment amount and uses a written self-declaration from the household, the monthly maximum amount of assistance must be **100% of the greater of the [Fair Market Rent or the Small Area Fair Market Rent](#)** for the area in which the applicant resides.¹

4 Allowable Expenses

4.2 Rent and Utilities

Households can receive up to **12 months** of one-time financial assistance.¹ Financial assistance can include a **combination of rent arrears, and three month future rent**. Households may only access the collective TRAH and T-RAP assistance only once. In addition, the total number of months of assistance is strictly based on the number of months the households is in arrears per the landlord. For example, if a household has zero months of arrears, they may only receive three months of future assistance maximum.

Rent

Rent arrears are when any rent payment is missed or past due, including when the current month's rent is past due.

Rent arrears may be paid to a landlord even if the tenant has moved out of the property. The arrears time frame (after March 13, 2020 to current), 12 months maximum and all other aspects of this program, included necessary documentation, remain the same.

Assistance cannot be provided for arrears that were accrued before March 13, 2020.¹ This means rent arrears for March 2020, needs to be pro-rated from March 13, to March 31 (19 days).

Future rent is the rent *after* the current month and can be made up to three months at a time.¹

- ✓ Households can receive assistance with three months future rent only, if the household does not have rental arrears.¹

Rent Assistance May be Provided Only Once

If a household receives any one-time financial rent assistance from T-RAP **or** TERA funding they are not eligible to receive additional T-RAP or TERA assistance through re-applying. The funding is limited and CFTH seeks to assist as many households as possible one time.

Non-Rent Costs on Lease

Costs that are not rent costs, but are in the lease AND paid to the landlord monthly may be counted as "rental costs." This may include water/sewer/garbage, electricity, pet rent, washer/dryer rent, carport/parking space rent.

Those who pay electricity costs should always be referred to Clark Public Utilities to be screened for assistance.

Clark Public Utility (CPU) Utility and Rent Assistance

Only 12 months of arrears and future assistance consisting of rent, Clark Public Utilities utility assistance or both may be provided to any household. This means CFTH staff must verify if the household received utility assistance in HMIS. If Utility Assistance was provided, rent assistance may only be provided during the months of utility assistance and up to 12 months total

between the two types of assistance.

EXAMPLE: Household may receive Utility Arrears assistance Aug 2020-Jan 2021 and during six other months, three of which can be future months.

March 2020 (19 days)	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020
August 2020	September 2020	October 2020	November 2020	December 2020
Rent Paid	Rent Paid	Rent Paid	Rent Paid	Rent Paid
January 2021	February 2021	March 2021	April 2021	May 2021
Rent Paid				

EXAMPLE Household may receive Rent Arrears assistance June 2020-February 2021 and during three additional months of arrears or future payments.

March 2020 (19 days)	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020
			Utilities Paid	Utilities Paid
August 2020	September 2020	October 2020	November 2020	December 2020
Utilities Paid	Utilities Paid	Utilities Paid	Utilities Paid	Utilities Paid
January 2021	February 2021	March 2021	April 2021	May 2021
Utilities Paid	Utilities Paid			

Calculating Maximum Rent Payment

Payments can be up to 150% of [Fair Market Rent](#) (FMR) for Clark County, WA and must not be more than the total amount due. FMR calculations do not need to include the cost of utilities.

NO LEASE OF RENTAL AGREEMENT:

In cases where the household does not have source documentation of the rental payment amount and relies on a written self-declaration from the household,

- The monthly maximum amount of assistance must be 100% of the greater of the Fair Market Rent for the area in which the applicant resides.¹
- Only three months of assistance between arrears or future payments is allowable.
- The household must also attest that they have not received, and does not anticipate receiving, another source of public or private subsidy or assistance for the rental costs that are the subject of the attestation.¹
- CFTH must obtain source documentation of the rental payment amount after three months in order to provide further assistance to the household.¹

See the ***Commerce/Clark County T-RAP & TERA Household Information and Eligibility Form*** for details on how to document.

Payments

Documentation of payments made to a landlord on behalf of the household must be provided to the household.¹

CFTH will send the final approved copy of the landlord payment agreement form to the household by e-mail. If an e-mail is not provided, the form will be mailed and documented in the client case notes.

CFTH staff must make reasonable efforts to obtain the cooperation of landlords and utility providers to accept payments. Outreach will be considered complete if:

- ✓ A request for participation is sent in writing, by certified mail, to the landlord and the addressee does not respond to the request within 14 calendar days after mailing; or¹
- ✓ If CFTH has made at least three attempts by phone or email over a 10 calendar-day period to request the landlord's participation.
- ✓ All efforts must be documented in the client files.

The final outreach attempt or notice to the landlord must be documented.¹

5 Local Variance

6 Coordinated Entry

Access to the CFTH TERA and T-RAP rent assistance program will be through the Housing Solutions Center Prevention assistance waitlist. Beginning March 29, 2021, households have two access points to get on the waitlist:

- Call the Housing Hotline: 360-695-9677 (open M-F 9am-5pm and Sat-Sun and Holidays 11am-5pm). Households will be screened for general eligibility and if found generally eligible will be placed on the Prevention waitlist.
- Fill out the on-line Treasury Rent Assistance e-Screening Form through the portal. Households that meet the general eligibility requirements will be placed on the waitlist.

Placement on the waitlist does not guarantee assistance.

- Funding is limited and may not allow for all on the waitlist to be served.
- Households may be found not eligible after the formal eligibility determination.

The Prevention assistance waitlist may close at any time due to limited funding. Households may call the Housing Hotline or view the CFTH webpage to determine if the waitlist is screening for new additional households.

Households who identify as having at least one adult BIPOC member, a Veteran or person active in the military, or as an immigrant or refugee will be placed on the CFTH Prevention waitlist. Those households will also be directed to check-in with the population specific access point in Clark County to see if they can receive assistance through their process.

Once a household is on the Prevention waitlist they do not need to check-in unless there is a change in phone number or e-mail provided for contact. Any needed change can be reported through the Housing Hotline: 360-695-9677.

Households on the waitlist will be called and e-mailed (if information is provided) by staff on a first come, first served basis through CFTH, Share and Janus Youth Programs (head of households under age 25). Households will be reached out to at least three times in a one week period before the agency moves on. The final phone call or e-mail will specify that the agency will move on should they not receive contact from the household by a specific date.

CFTH will refer households to other Coordinated Entry programs when their needs cannot be met by TERA and T-RAP and a program that could meet their needs exists and has openings.

7 Grant Requirements

7.1 Self-Declaration Policy

Back-up Documentation Decision Process:

- A. CFTH staff must ask each household for the traditionally needed documentation (lease, rental agreement, pay stubs, payment statements, BVS).
- B. If the household cannot produce the needed documentation, then secondary documentation will be requested (landlord attestation, bank statements, third party attestation, tax statement, W-2).
- C. If the above documentation cannot be provided or obtained
 - a. CFTH staff member must note in the case notes why the reasonable documents could not be obtained (e.g., The client does not have a bank account and is new to the community)
 - b. Then, the self-declaration may be obtained from the client.

7.2 Termination and Denial of Service Policy

REASONS for DENIAL of Service

- A. Not eligible for the program based on the CFTH Program Guidelines.
 - This may be determined during the initial screening to get onto the TERA and T-RAP program waitlist.
 - Or determined during the in-depth eligibility documentation process.
- B. Households are assisted first come, first served, basis on the program waitlist. Households who do not get onto the waitlist during open periods or are on the waitlist when funding runs out among the Housing Solutions Center partner agencies will be denied assistance.
- C. Households who do not meet the CFTH agency HSC guidelines of being respectful, and safe may be denied service if at least three attempts have been made by the CFTH staff and Diversion Director to provide assistance and HSC guidelines have not been followed. This is only exercised in extreme cases.
- D. Landlord does not respond to the attempts to engage per policies in T-RAP/TRAH guidelines.
- E. Rental unit is not within the boundaries of Clark County, WA
- F. Household has already received T-RAP or TERA assistance. Households may only access the programs once.
- G. CFTH has identified that household was not truthful and/or engaged in fraud.

TERMINATION

All households who are terminated from the program will receive a written notice specifying the reasons for termination/exit. The termination notice will also include the grievance process. This document will be

Households may be terminated due to:

1. Identifying household was not truthful and/or engaged in fraud.

Households denied for services due waitlists being closed or being determine ineligible at the Housing Hotline screening level, which includes submitting a portal application, will be verbally informed of their ineligibility and the reason this was determined. Households will be informed that they may grieve the decision if they feel the determination was reached incorrectly.

Once on the Rent Assistance waitlist, households denied assistance or terminated while receiving assistance will receive a Denial of Services/Termination notice by e-mail or postal mail. The notice will specify the reason for the Denial of Service/Termination and will include the grievance process.

All households screened through the Housing Hotline or whom submitted an interest form through the portal, will be entered into HMIS. The end result of the assistance, including denied services or provided assistance will be entered.

T-RAP & TERA Program Guidance Version 1

7.3 Language Assistance Services Requirement

CFTH will ensure their clients with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency have access to vital information, and are responsible for ensuring meaningful language assistance services. This requirement will be met by using

- 1) in-person interpretation: spoken and sign language or
- 2) remote interpretation using phone or video. Language interpretation costs are an eligible use of grant funds.

CFTH utilizes Language Link for interpretation Services.

Language Link: <https://www.language.link/telephonic-interpretation/>

7.4 Changes to Guidelines

CFTH may revise the guidelines at any time based on funder requirements.

7.6 Grievance Procedure & Form



Council for the Homeless Grievance Process

The Council for the Homeless (CFTH) hopes to resolve the concerns people receiving services may have either in person or by phone. We want to work through any challenges and provide excellent assistance to our community.

If CFTH makes a decision that you do not agree with, you may file a grievance which gives you the chance to review the decision, explain why you disagree, and what you would like to see happen instead. This form can be found on the CFTH website or requested by calling the Housing Solutions Center or directly asking a Housing Solutions Center staff member. **If you need a document translated or an interpreter, you may request it at any point.**

If you have questions about submitting a grievance, or need a replacement copy you may ask for assistance from *any* CFTH staff member at the Housing Solutions Center (HSC), on the Housing Hotline or find the form on the CFTH website. The grievance form should be completed and turned back into the Council for the Homeless by dropping it off to the HSC, e-mailing or mailing (please see contact information below).

You may also request assistance filling out a grievance form verbally by asking *any* CFTH staff member for assistance at the Housing Solutions Center or on the Housing Hotline. You would then talk with a staff member (different from whomever is involved with the grievance) over the phone and verbally share what you would like written on the form.

When a grievance is submitted, the CFTH Coordinated Entry Director or Diversion Director, depending on the focus of the grievance, will review the grievance and may contact you to review why the decision was made or ask for additional information. The grievance decision will be provided based on your chosen communication method and language within 15 business days from when CFTH staff receive your grievance form.

If the CFTH Coordinated Entry or Diversion Director responds to the grievance and you disagree, you have 30 calendar days to request (through e-mail or phone call) that the grievance be considered by the CFTH Executive Director. The Executive Director will make the final decision regarding the situation within 10 days of the submitted final grievance. The final decision will be provided in the preferred communication method and language chosen on the grievance form.

CFTH Mailing Address 2500 Main St. Vancouver, WA 98660	Housing Solutions Center Lobby Address 2306 NE Andresen Vancouver, WA 98660 (Call first, to see if open)	Grievance Contact Information (360)699-5106 x. 2 info@councilforthehomeless.org
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Updated: 8.20



CFTH/Housing Solutions Center (HSC) Client Grievance Form

Date: _____

Client(s) Name(s): _____

Phone /Text Number: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

How would you like to learn about the grievance decision (circle one)?

Telephone Call E-mail Mailed Letter Text

Would you like to review the reason a decision was made with a Supervisor/Director? Yes No

Name of HSC Staff Involved: _____

Do you need interpretation assistance or this document in another language? Yes No

What CFTH/Housing Solutions Center decision do you disagree with and why?*

What do you think should have happened and why?*

*Feel free to use the back of this sheet or attach a second page.

HSC Client Signature (typed name is ok) : _____ Date: _____

Please submit this form to the HSC staff or mail / e-mail to CFTH. Your concerns are taken seriously and the HSC Director will respond within 15 business days of the receipt of the completed grievance form.

CFTH ONLY:	Date of Receipt:	Program:
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8 Additional Requirements

8.1 Ineligible Use of Funds

CFTH staff must inform their supervisor if grant funds are spent on ineligible households or expenses. CFTH Management will inform Clark County and WA Department of Commerce if grant funds are spent on ineligible households or expenses.

All reasonable attempts must be made to prevent ineligible use of funds.

9 Appendix

9.1 Reporting

CFTH staff are required to provide quality data to the best of their ability. Maintaining good data quality is important for effective program evaluation.

- ✓ CFTH will choose to report data in HMIS.

CFTH HMIS data privacy and security policies for HMIS information collected is followed. In addition, CFTH confidentiality policies are followed to ensure the individuals and households are protected, that the information is collected and used only for the purpose of submitting reports, and provide confidentiality protections for data collected about any individuals who are survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, or stalking.¹

CONFIDENTIALITY OF CLIENT RECORDS

All program files and records are maintained in a confidential manner. This includes keeping files in a cabinet under lock and key. Only authorized staff and supervisors with who work with this program will have access. The cabinet will be kept in a locked office. Documents will be destroyed at the end of seven years post program end by on-site shredding.

Information to Retain

CFTH will retain the following information:

Information to Retain	Located On
Landlord’s name, address, social security number, tax identification number or DUNS number ¹	Rent Payment Agreement Form
Address of rental unit and city ¹	Rent Payment Agreement Form and Utility Payment Agreement Form

