

NEWS RELEASE



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\$17 Million For Emergency Rental Assistance Available to Kalamazoo County Residents in Need

Nonprofit Partnership Coordinating Federal Aid for Past-Due Rent, Utilities

KALAMAZOO, Michigan [March 29, 2021]—Emergency aid totaling \$17 million, covering past-due rent and utilities, is now available for renters who qualify in Kalamazoo County.

The help comes none too soon for individuals and families struggling to cope with the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, said Sara Jacobs, Director of the Kalamazoo County Continuum of Care.

“While our community is making progress in the fight against the virus, many households have fallen behind on rent and utilities due to lost wages and other hardships,” Jacobs said. “CERA offers hope for many people to keep a roof over their heads, keep the lights on and stay connected.”

The COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) program is part of \$25 billion set aside for rental aid in the recent federal COVID-19 relief package. Funds are being allocated to a network of local nonprofits through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). Support is available for rent and utilities, including electricity, natural gas, water, sewer, internet and trash (if billed with another utility).

Locally, three agencies are collaborating to distribute CERA funds to those in need. [Housing Resources Inc.](#) is the lead agency, partnering with [Open Doors Kalamazoo](#) and [Integrated Services of Kalamazoo](#).

Applicants living in Kalamazoo County can call (269) 382-0287 to start the process. An online application will be available soon at HRI’s website, www.housingresourcesinc.org. There is also a contact form on the website that can be used.

“HRI believes that the only solution to homelessness is housing,” said Michelle Davis, Executive Director, Housing Resources Inc. “Right now, preventing people from losing their homes is an important solution to ensure that more people don’t find themselves homeless. This partnership with the Kalamazoo County Continuum of Care, Open Doors Kalamazoo and Integrated Services of Kalamazoo demonstrates the partnership and deep collaborations that have become the norm during the pandemic that has resulted in people staying housed.”

Under CERA, an applicant can receive 10-12 months of rent support (up to 150% of federal Fair Housing Rent) depending on household income, including up to three months for future rent. Individuals can also apply for an additional three months of rent support to assure stable housing. One-time utility assistance ranges from \$1,500 to \$2,500, including \$300-\$500 for future payment, depending on household size. A one-time stipend of \$300 is available for internet costs.

Eligible individuals must have a household income under 80% of the area median income for their household size; qualify for unemployment benefits or have experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant costs, or experienced other financial hardship due directly or indirectly to the coronavirus outbreak; and can demonstrate, with a past-due utility or rent notice, that they are at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

Eighty percent of the area median income for a one-person household is \$44,240; for a two-person household, \$50,560; for a three-person household, \$56,880; for a four-person household, \$63,200; for a five-person household, \$68,320; for a six-person household, \$73,360; for a seven-person household, \$78,400; and for an eight-person household, \$83,440.

An eligible applicant must also be living in a rental unit; able to document past-due rent and utilities after March 13, 2020; have experienced an eligible COVID-19 hardship since March 13, 2020; and have a lease agreement in the tenant’s name if a written lease was completed (verbal leases may qualify but will need additional documentation). Renters as well as landlords can apply.

Also as part of this effort, [Goodwill Industries of Southwest Michigan](#) is providing social support services for CERA participants to help them stay housed for the long-term. Known as Community Connect, these services and resources touch on a wide array of needs, including housing, education, food, mobility and disability needs, health care access, life skills, family and parenting skills, legal services and many more.

“The shared goal of our CERA partnership is to help individuals and families get through the current crisis while equipping them with the skills and support they need for long-term success,” Jacobs said.

Further details on qualifications and necessary documentation are available online from MSHDA, tinyurl.com/CERAdetailsMI.

About Kalamazoo County CoC

The Kalamazoo County Continuum of Care is part of an effort by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for communities to streamline funding requests and coordinate services for unhoused individuals. The CoC promotes community-wide planning and strategic use of resources to address homelessness; improves coordination and integration with mainstream resources and other programs; improves data collection and performance measurement; and utilizes the strengths, partnerships and expertise to address the unique needs of individuals and the community. In January 2020, leadership of the Kalamazoo County CoC transitioned from Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region. On the web:

changethehistory.org/continuum-of-care.