



DHS News

Newsletter of the Allegheny County
Department of Human Services



March 2021

DHS and partner agencies collaborate to support renters, landlords

On March 15, a new round of federal rental and utility assistance became available to eligible County residents. Allegheny County Emergency Rental Assistance, administered by DHS and overseen by ACTION-Housing with support from partner agencies, is a collaborative effort to distribute this federal funding.

Applicants are eligible if they have been financially impacted by the pandemic, including provable loss of income or employment, COVID-related increases in expenses such as medical bills or care of a household member, or the inability to get back to work for those laid off prior to March 2020. Applications are only accepted online; however, drop-in centers are available around the County for those who do not have computer access, and ACTION-Housing is assisting those who cannot make it to a drop-in center by phone. Representatives from ACTION-Housing, the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh are contacting applicants to help them through the process. Applicants should receive a response to their submission within three weeks, and applicants who are denied can appeal. More than 3,000 applications were received in the first two weeks.

To encourage participation, DHS staff members from the Office of Analytics, Technology and Planning (ATP); Office of Community Relations (OCR); and Office of Community Services (OCS) are attending every Magisterial District Court's landlord/tenant hearing for the next several months. Resource specialists at DHS support the staff and judges at the Magisterial District Courts for criminal and truancy hearings.

"The courts are great partners and supporting landlord/tenant work is an opportunity that we're happy to coordinate" said Erin Williams, resource specialist supervisor in OCS.

Before, during and after the hearings, staff connect eligible renters to Allegheny County Emergency Rental Assistance and any other rental assistance or resources needed. DHS staff are also actively working with tenant advocacy groups to figure out strategies to address the renter's needs. Rent Help Pittsburgh is following up with tenants who do not show up for their hearing, and Just Mediation is offering mediation assistance to any landlord or tenant who asks for help.

More information about rent assistance can be found at
<https://covidrentrelief.alleghenycounty.us>.