

CARES ACT- Coronavirus Relief Fund Food Assistance Program – Frequently Asked Questions

The CARES ACT- Coronavirus Relief Fund Rent, Utilities and Food Assistance Program (CARES Act) provides a one-time rental and utility assistance to eligible Palm Beach County residents who have experienced loss of income, reduction in hours, or unemployment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic **only**.

Palm Beach County will utilize the funds provided by the CARES Act- Coronavirus Relief Fund to support this program. The rules and regulations associated under section 601(a) of the Social Security Act, as added by section 5001 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (“CARES Act”) will govern the use of the funds.

WARNING: Section 1001 of Title 19 of the U.S. code makes it a criminal offense to make willful false statements or misrepresentation to any department or agency of the United States as to any matter within the jurisdiction. False information may result in civil liability, and/or in criminal penalties including, but not limited to, fine, imprisonment or both. *The program is not designed to assist those who were not financially impacted by COVID-19 pandemic.*

Q. Who is eligible to receive food assistance?

Individuals or households residing in Palm Beach County who meet the following program criteria:

- Applicant that reside within the corporate limits of Palm Beach County.
- **Applicant(s) whose total income is at or below 140% of Area Median Income (AMI) limits, established by HUD for the jurisdiction of Palm Beach County, FL, prior to COVID-19.**
- **Applicants who suffered a loss of wages and/or income directly related to COVID-19.** You must be able to document that you were unable to pay your rent or utilities strictly due to temporary loss of income, reduction in hours, or employment are a result of the COVID-19 pandemic **only**.

Q. What do I need to know before I apply for the program?

Program requirements are as follows:

- Applicants must attest that they have experienced loss of income, reduction of hours or both, or unemployment, directly related to COVID-19 pandemic.
- Applicants must provide demographic information such as household member names, social security numbers (if applicable), dates of birth, etc.

Q. What documents are required to apply for food assistance?

Below is a list of required documents. All documents **must** be submitted in order to process the application. Incomplete applications may result in delays or application denial.

- **Proof of income for eligibility prior to COVID-19(Applicant Only)**
 - a. Pay stubs prior to COVID-19 crisis
 - b. Bank statements prior to COVID-19 crisis
 - c. Last filed tax return if self-employed
 - d. Self-attestation form to document loss of income, if reliable proof of loss of income cannot be secured
 - e. Community Services Department clients who received services in last 24 months will not be required to submit the income documentation unless a Case Manager deems it necessary.

[*Sample on page 14 and 32-34.](#)

- **Proof of COVID-19 Crisis (Applicant Only)**

Submit one or more:

- a) Letter from employer stating your job loss or reduced work schedule and hours
- b) Unemployment claim or unemployment submitted application
- c) Before crisis pay stubs and current pay stubs with reduced hours
- d) Evidence for loss of income if self-employed

*[*Sample on pages 28-30 and 32-34.](#)*

- **Valid Government Issued ID (Applicant Only)**

*[*Sample on page 31.](#)*

- **Social Security Card (Applicant Only)**

Q. How many times can I receive assistance?

You may receive a one-time assistance benefit for all services. *Only one card will be given out per household.*

Q. My COVID-19 application for rental and utility assistance is already in the system. How do I add food assistance to my existing application?

- a) You will be able to add “Food Service” to your application if your application is fully processed and/or payment has been made for your earlier request. You can login and apply under the ‘COVID-19’ tab and re-apply for “Food Assistance”.
- b) If your current COVID-19 application is **under review or in pending status**, you **will not be able** to add additional service. You will need to request CSD to add ‘Food Assistance’ by:
 - Calling us at 561-355-4792 during regular business hours.
 - Via email at csdcares@pbcgov.org with the **Subject Line- Add Food Assistance** or your Case Manager.
 - Please include the applicant’s full name, application number, mailing address and a brief description to demonstrate your need.

Once we process your request, we will add the request to your existing application. You will receive an email with a confirmation and/or you can check the status by logging in the system. We may prioritize the request for the clients who have not received any other benefits at this time.

Q. I selected food assistance on my rental and utility assistance. Do I need to apply for food assistance if my application is currently in the system with a submitted or pending status?

No action is needed. Applicant will receive the card once the application is approved by Palm Beach County, Community Services Department. The card will be mailed within 10-15 days of approving your application at the mailing address provided on the application.

Q. My Application is already in the system as submitted or pending and I requested food assistance while applying for rental/utility assistance.

No action is needed. Applicant will receive the card once the application is approved by Palm Beach County, Community Services Department. The card will be mailed within 10-15 days of approving your application at the mailing address provided on the application.

Q. I received rental and utility assistance thru CARES funds. How do I request Food Assistance?

You will be able to add “Food Service” to your application if your application is fully processed and/or payment has been made for your earlier request. You can login and re-apply under Covid-19 Tab and check “Food Assistance”

For re-applicants, documents already in the system may not need to be uploaded.

Q. What are there income guidelines for this program?

Applicants must meet gross annual incomes not exceeding 140 % of Area Median Income (AMI) limits, established by HUD for the jurisdiction of Palm Beach County, Fla., prior to COVID-19 as follows:

Household /Family Size	140%
1	\$86,100
2	\$98,420
3	\$110,740
4	\$122,920
5	\$132,860
6	\$142,660
7	\$152,460
8	\$162,260
9	\$172,088
10	\$181,922

Q. If I qualify, how much funding will I receive for food assistance?

Food assistance benefit allowances are based on household size and maximum amounts are listed below. Only one card will be given out per household.

- 1-2 Household members: \$400
- 3-4 Household members: \$800
- 5 or more Household members: \$1,000

Q. How do I apply for the CARES Act Food Assistance program?

You may apply for the CARES Act Rent & Utilities Assistance program online at <http://www.pbcgov.org/OSCARSS> or [rentalassistancepbc.org](http://www.rentalassistancepbc.org) . Applications can be accessed through any internet connection. CSD staff may assist you by calling (561) 355-4792.

It is also helpful to visit the [CARES Act Frequently Asked Questions](#) and the OSCARSS [online tutorial videos](#) prior to completing an application.

NOTE: Please ensure that your mailing address is correct. If your mailing address has changed since June 1, 2020, please log into your account to provide the most up-to-date information at www.rentalassistancepbc.org.

Q. How can I verify the status of my application?

To verify the status of an application, visit CSD's Client Services Search at www.pbcgov.com/clientsservicessearch or directly through the OSCARSS portal at www.rentalassistance.pbc.org.

Once an application is reviewed, you will receive an email for any pending documentation. Pending documents will also be listed in your application when you log in.

Applicants are encouraged to check their emails regularly and to maintain a valid phone number on file, as reviewers make contact by email, and they send important updates regarding applications.

Q. How long does it take to process the application?

If you are eligible, the approval process may take 4 to 6 six weeks. You may also check the status of your application by logging to your account

Q. How long does it take to receive food assistance?

You will receive food assistance based on the number of household you listed in your application and by providing the documentation outlining the crisis due to COVID-19. Once your application is approved, you will receive a Prepaid Visa card in 2-3 weeks.

The card will be mailed to the mailing address you provided in your application. Please ensure that your mailing address is correct. You can verify your mailing address or update if needed by logging to your account at www.rentalassistancepb.org.

Q. What is the Prepaid Visa for food assistance?

The Palm Beach County Community Services Department will provide direct assistance for food to eligible residents of Palm Beach County under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Palm Beach County will issue pre-paid debit cards to approved residents to purchase food.

Q. How does the dash Prepaid Visa work?

The card is a Prepaid Card. It can be used with a signature everywhere Visa debit cards are accepted for food purchase.

Q. How do I activate my Prepaid Visa card?

- a. To activate your Prepaid Visa card, call toll-free 1-833-848-5768.
- b. You will enter the last four digits of your SSN.
- c. Upon activation, you will receive a Personalized Identification Number (PIN). You can change this number at any time. Your PIN **will not** grant access to cash back or cash at ATMs.
- d. Turn the card over and sign your name in ink on the signature stripe.
- e. Verify funds have been loaded to the card. Your card is then ready to use.

NOTE: Please remember that the food card may ONLY be used to purchase food at grocery stores. You may use the grocery store of your choice but the card is only valid on food items. The card is intended for the benefit of your household only and should not be shared outside your household. The card is issued based on the request of food hardship due to COVID-19 Crisis and to be used for the intended purpose.

Q. Where can I use the Prepaid Visa card?

The food assistance card may **ONLY** be used to purchase food at grocery stores. You may use the grocery store of your choice but the card is only valid on food items.

The card is intended for the benefit of your household only and should not be shared outside your household. The card is issued based on the request of food hardship due to COVID-19 crisis and it is to be used for the intended purpose.

Q. What do I do if the card is declined?

This means that the amount authorized by the merchant is more than the remaining card balance. When this situation occurs, please visit www.paymentcardinfo.com on your computer or mobile device¹, log in securely, and check your balance.

Q. How can I check the balance on my card?

You can check your balance online at www.paymentcardinfo.com or call 1-833-848-5768. You can also check your balance at any ATM by using the balance inquiry feature. Third-party fees may apply.

Q. Are there any other types of transaction I should know about?

Yes. Be aware of other pre-authorization processes for all “Open End Transactions” associated with certain types of merchants that sell goods or services where the final amount they will charge to your Card is unknown at the time they first authorize your Card. In these transactions, your account may be “authorized” or “have money held” for more than the actual amount of the purchase until the final transaction is complete - meaning that those “authorized dollars” are not available for you to spend elsewhere. The card is to assist you with the grocery expenses at any local grocery stores that accepts Visa Debit Card.

Q. What should I do if my card is lost or stolen?

Immediately notify the issuer by going online to www.paymentcardinfo.com or call toll-free 1-833-848-5768. Customer service representatives are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to handle this occurrence. There will be a charge of \$15 dollar for issuing a new card and it will be reduced from your balance. Applicant will be responsible for the safe keep of the card.

Q. How will I receive the Prepaid Card?

Applicant will receive the card once the application is approved by Palm Beach County, Community Services Department. The card will be mailed within 10-15 days of approving your application at the mailing address provided on the application. All eligibility questions to be referred to Palm Beach County, Community Services Department at 561-355-4792.

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