

CARES ACT- Coronavirus Relief Fund – Rent and Utilities Assistance Program

Frequently Asked Questions

The CARES ACT- Coronavirus Relief Fund Rent and Utilities 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 and assistance will only be provided for past due rent payment and/or utilities due from March 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020. 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.*

This information is available in English, Spanish and Creole.

Q. Who is eligible to receive 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:

- Assistance will only be provided for past due expenses due beginning on March 1, 2020 not to exceed three (3) months.
- Applicants must attest that they have experienced loss of income, reduction of hours or both, or unemployment, directly related to COVID-19 pandemic that caused applicant to miss rental and/or utility payments.
- Applicants must provide demographic information such as household member names, social security numbers (if applicable), dates of birth, etc.
- Applicant(s) must have a lease and other utilities in their or a household member's name. Household member must be listed on the application.
- Applicant(s) or household member must not have received any other financial assistance for rent and utilities for the timeframe payment is requested.
- Applicant(s) must apply for unemployment benefits and provide support documentation if applicable.

Q. What documents are required to apply for 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.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- **Proof of income for eligibility prior to COVID-19 (All adult household members 18 years old and older)**
 - 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.
- **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
- **Valid Government Issued ID (Applicant Only)**
- **Social Security Card (Applicant Only)**
 - **Applying for Rent**
 - a. Rental lease agreement
 - b. If new vendor for Palm Beach County, must provide landlord's e-mail address/phone number for landlord to register. Landlord will receive the link to create/update vendor information and certify balance statement if not provided by the applicant.
 - c. Delay in vendor registration will delay approval of the application.
 - **Applying for Electricity Payment**
 - a. Electric bill(s) showing past due amount.
 - **Applying for Water Payment**
 - a. Water bill(s) showing past due amount.
 - **Applying for Gas Payment**
 - a) Gas bill(s) showing past due amount.
 - **Applying for Food Assistance**
 - a. No additional documentation is needed.

Q. How many times can I receive assistance?

You may receive a **one-time** assistance benefit for all services.

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 can I receive for rental and utility assistance?

Assistance may be provided as follows and are based on demonstrated need and funding availability:

- Rent up 3 months and up to \$5,800 in arrears beginning in March 2020
- Electric, water and/or gas up to 3 months and up to \$1,200 in arrears beginning in March 2020

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

Determination of amount of assistance will be provided at a later date, once assistance is available.

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

You may apply for the CARES Act Rent & Utilities Assistance program online at <http://www.pbcgov.org/OSCARSS>. Applications can be accessed through any internet connection. CSD staff may assist you by calling (561) 355-4792. In addition, eight community partner agencies are available to assist you in person and help with entering and submitting your application online.

You may refer to **"Who can help me apply for services?"** question for additional information.

The City of West Palm Beach will assist **city residents only** with CARES Act applications. Residents may call (561) 822-1250 to schedule an appointment.

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

Q. Where can I submit my pending documents in person?

Note: *This service is only available for clients who have submitted their application and need assistance with uploading pending documentation.*

Applicants may make an appointment to submit documents at CSD's drive-thru intake, located at 810 Datura Street, West Palm Beach, and 1440 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Riviera Beach, on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. and 1 to 4 p.m.

Please call (561) 355-4792 to make/confirm appointments and confirm drive-thru hours. It is mandatory for clients to wear a mask and follow all social distancing guidelines when they arrive.

A CSD staff person can help make sure required documents are compiled correctly beforehand. Keep in mind that **it is necessary to write the application number on all documents submitted.**

Only applicants who have applied and have **pending documentation** may also submit their documents at any PBC Library branch. Some library locations may have limited in-person services. For more information or to locate your nearest library, visit <http://www.pbclibrary.org/locations>.

Note: *PBC Library staff will only receive documents for pending applications. Assistance with applying for the program is not offered at any PBC Library branch.* For assistance applying for the program, please call (561) 355-4792 or contact any of the eight community-based organizations that are providing navigation services (refer to *"Who can help me apply for services?"* Q&A below).

Applicants are encouraged to check their emails regularly and maintain a valid phone number on file, as reviewers make contact by email, and they send important updates regarding applications. It is also helpful to visit the CARES Act Frequently Asked Questions and the OSCARSS online tutorial videos prior to completing an application.

Q. Who can help me apply for services?

Applications are available online at <http://www.pbcgov.org/OSCARSS> and accessed through any internet connection. Additionally, CSD partnered with eight community agencies that can also assist clients by providing navigation services. Visit their websites or call for more information and/or to make an appointment.

AGENCY NAME	LOCATION(S)	PHONE	WEBSITE
Adopt-a-Family Family Division of the Lewis Center	1000 45th Street West Palm Beach, 33407	(561) 444-0398	www.aafpbc.org
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Palm Beach	9995 N Military Trail West Palm Beach, 33410	(561) 775-9560 (561) 360-3327	www.catholiccharitiesdpb.org
Community Partners Housing Services	Remote	(561) 386-2704 (561) 841-3500, x.1002	www.cp-cto.org/housing-services
Farmworker Coordinating Council of Palm Beach County, Inc.	Lake Worth Office 1123 Crestwood Blvd. Lake Worth, 33460 Belle Glade Office 233 W. Ave. A Suite D Belle Glade, 33430	Lake Worth (561) 533-7227 Belle Glade (561) 992-0603	www.farmworkercouncil.org
Palm Beach County Housing Authority	3432 W. 45th Street West Palm Beach, 33407	(561) 684-2160	www.pbchaf.org
Pathways to Prosperity, Inc. (P2P)	970 N. Seacrest Blvd. Boynton Beach, 33435	(561) 523-0179	www.pathwaysboynton.org
The Lord's Place Prevention Team	2808 N Australian Ave, West Palm Beach, 33407	(561) 537-4652 (561) 494-0125, x. 1115	www.thelordsplace.org
The Urban League of Palm Beach County	700 N Australian Ave West Palm Beach, 33407	(561) 833-1461	www.ulpbc.org

*Visit the agency's website for more information and to make an appointment.

The city of West Palm Beach will **only assist city residents** with CARES Act applications. City residents may call (561) 822-1250 to schedule an appointment.

Applicants are encouraged to check their emails regularly as reviewers make contact by email, and they send important updates regarding applications. To verify the status of an application, visit CSD's Client Services Search at www.pbcgov.com/clientservicessearch or directly through the OSCARSS portal at www.pbcgov.com/OSCARSS.

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/clientservicessearch or directly through the OSCARSS portal at www.pbcgov.com/OSCARSS.

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. What kinds of housing units can be assisted?

Units such as apartments, houses, townhouses, and mobile homes are allowable.

Q. I am behind on my rental payments for the month of February, am I eligible for assistance?

No. Assistance will only be provided for rent and utilities beginning on March 1, 2020 for no more than 3 months. Assistance is only available to those who can provide evidence that they experienced loss of income, reduction in hours, or unemployment is a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q. I have just received a stimulus check and/or income tax return payment. Should I pay for my rent?

Yes. Do not miss paying your rent if you can make the payment. During this time of delay, if you are currently behind, you should attempt to communicate with landlord about getting caught up. But, do not wait to receive notice in order to take action. You should always open your mail and/or read correspondence received from your landlord.

Q. Do I have to repay the funds?

No.

Q. Do you offer rental and utility assistance for crisis not related to COVID-19? If so, how do I apply?

Yes. Our department offers assistance with rent and utilities for crisis not related to COVID-19. To apply, login to OSCARSS and select "Apply for Services". Paper applications may be requested for non-COVID-19 related services.

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