HOPE

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES + PREVENTION OF EVICTIONS

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Housing Opportunity and Prevention of Evictions (HOPE) Program is a new statewide initiative that provides rent and utility assistance to eligible low- and moderate-income renters experiencing financial hardship due to the economic effects of COVID-19. The new program will help prevent evictions and utility disconnections in order to promote housing stability during the ongoing pandemic. HOPE is an initiative of the NC Office of Recovery and Resiliency, a division of the North Carolina Department of Public Safety.

Eligibility

HOPE will provide rent and utility assistance for renters who:

- Have been affected by the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic,
- Have a household income that is 80% of the area median income or lower, and
- Are behind on their rent or utilities when they apply.

How to Apply

Renters should **call 2-1-1** if they need rent or utility assistance. Callers will be screened by 2-1-1 for eligibility and will be referred to a community partner agency to complete the application process. Renters can also apply online at nc211.org/hope.

Program Features

The HOPE Program is a grant program, not a loan program.

- Rent Assistance:
  - Pays rent payments on behalf of applicant.
  - Is available for up to six months, including back and future rent.
  - Is paid directly to landlords that agree to participate in the program.
- Utility Assistance:
  - Assists with essential utilities, such as:
    - Electricity.
    - Water and sewer/wastewater.
    - Natural gas.
    - Propane.
  - Is available for up to six months of past due utility payments.
  - Is paid directly to the utility provider.

Keeping families home, when it matters the most.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I apply for the HOPE Program? Choose one of these ways:

- **Call 2-1-1** if you need rent or utility assistance. You will be screened to see if you are eligible for the HOPE Program or for other programs that could assist you.
- Complete an online application at nc211.org/hope.

Who qualifies for rent or utility assistance from the HOPE Program?

In order to qualify for assistance for the HOPE Program, you must:

- Be a low- to moderate-income household (household must earn 80% or less of the area median income) at the time you apply,
- Be a renter,
- Occupy the rental property as your primary home,
- Have had your ability to pay rent or utilities affected by the coronavirus pandemic, and
- Be behind on your rent, utilities or both when you apply.

What are the steps for the HOPE process?

- During the call with 2-1-1, applicants will be asked for information about their household income and other eligibility factors. Eligible applicants will be referred to a community partner agency to complete the HOPE Program application. Applicants will be asked to provide documents that support their application.

What kind of information and documents will I need to provide during the application process?

- Current household income information,
- Government-issued identification,
- Proof of occupancy of the rental,
- Copy of a valid, current lease or other information on your lease agreement (for rent assistance), and
- Copy of utility bills or statements (for utility assistance).

I've been behind on my rent and utilities for months. How much will the HOPE Program pay for back-due rent and utilities?

- The program may cover up to six months of rent. This must include at least one payment that is already past due and up to five months of future rent payments, if the lease is still active. The program can also cover existing fees and surcharges as allowed under North Carolina law. The program can pay rent due on or after April 1, 2020.
- Past due utilities of up to six months will be paid directly to the utility provider, even if you are in a payment plan to catch up your account. The program can pay utility bills due on or after April 1, 2020.

What utilities are eligible for assistance?

- Electricity,
- Water,
- Sewer/Wastewater,
- Natural gas, and
- Propane delivery services, including routine safety checks as part the delivery service.

Will my landlord be a part of the application process if I need rent assistance?

Yes, your landlord must amend their lease agreement with you to receive the payments from the HOPE Program. The Program will provide this draft agreement to you and your landlord.

- Participating landlords must agree to:
  - Stop and dismiss any eviction proceeding against the renter,
  - Not evict the renter for non-payment of rent for the remainder of the lease,
  - Not increase the rent or impose new fees during the term of the lease, and
  - Maintain a safe and habitable dwelling for the renter.

Does an applicant have to need rent assistance to be eligible for utility assistance?

- No. Applicants can apply for only utility assistance, only rent assistance, or both.

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