Frequently Asked Questions about Rent Assistance

Do I need an appointment?

Yes. A one and a half to two hour appointment is required to review documentation, fill out paperwork, and determine if you are eligible for assistance. In some cases, where time or documentation is not sufficient, multiple appointments are necessary.

What documents do I need to bring to my appointment?

Hopefully you have had the list on the reverse of this paper explained and personalized to you. In general, be prepared to prove through documentation the following:

- The need for assistance is beyond your control.
- Assistance will prevent or resolve homelessness.
- You can afford household expenses after receiving the assistance.

Why so much paperwork and documents?

Community Action Services and Food Bank uses federal funding to assist clients. We have agreed to follow the strict government rules set for the funds use. Community Action is audited and required to account for the use of these funds. In other words, a case manager is not allowed to simply take someone's word for something. A client's financial need must be clearly proven within the paperwork.

In what cases are people denied assistance?

A roof over your head should be your most important expense. You must have a good reason why you cannot pay the rent on your own. Which means you will likely be denied if your need is the result of unwise spending, paying money to family/friends, lack of planning, or a job termination that's your fault.

Second, you must prove that you can afford your household's expenses after receiving the assistance. We probably cannot help if the need is permanent or there is no clear"light at the end of the tunnel".

Third, the assistance must in some way resolve or prevent homelessness and all other resources must have been explored. If there is a possibility of a rent payment plan, more time to save money, help form church or Workforce Services etc., we ask that you utilize those options.

How long do I have to wait to receive assistance?

An appointment with a case manager is only the first step, and appointments alone are no guarantee of assistance. In the majority of cases, a client will need to come back with more documentation, especially since additional facts about the situation might come up in the first appointment.

In addition to paperwork, each client must attend a one and a half hour "tenants rights" class on Saturdays at 9:00 AM at Community Action. Failure to attend this class will delay assistance until the class gets attended. An inspection on the place might also be required.

Keep in mind that all paperwork must be handed in by 4pm Friday for a payment to be made the following week. This means that a case finished on Monday will not have a check mailed until the following week. The typical time frame for determining eligibility, attending the class, completing inspection, and mailing a check to the landlord may take from 7 to 14 days after the first appointment. We recognize the process is not always quick, especially when considering sensitive move-in and eviction dates. For this reason, we try to work directly with landlords and ask them to be flexible as we go through the eligibility and assistance process.

How is payment issued?

Payments are processed on Tuesdays and mailed directly to landlords. Clients will never receive money directly.