



# LEON CARES

## Leon County Emergency Rental Assistance FAQ for Tenants

**Q: Who can apply and who is eligible to receive financial support through the Leon County Emergency Rental Assistance program?**

A: Leon County households experiencing financial difficulty due to COVID-19 may apply through the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Program. To be eligible, applicants must meet all of the following requirements:

- Have a total household income at or below the 80% Area Median Income (AMI) threshold
- Must be past-due on rent or utilities payments
- Must have been a Leon County resident for each of the past twelve (12) consecutive months
- Must have at least one household member who has: (1) Qualified for unemployment benefits, or (2) Experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant costs, or experienced other financial hardship due to COVID-19
- Must be a renter and the renter's landlord must be willing to accept payment from Leon County on the applicant's behalf

For the first two weeks of the program (from March 29 through April 11, 2021), Leon County will prioritize applicants whose household income is at or below the 50% AMI threshold as well as households who have at least one member who has been unemployed for the past 90+ days.

**Q: What expenses can this program support?**

A: Past due rent, past due utilities, and/or up to three (3) months of future rent or utility expenses.

**Q: How much funding will I be able to receive through the program?**

A: Eligible households may receive up to 15 months of total assistance for rent and/or utility payments, which may include up to 12 months for past-due payments as well as future payments in 3-month increments to ensure housing stability. Financial assistance cannot exceed applicant's actual demonstrated financial need. Awarded funds will be paid directly to landlords and utility service providers.

Please note that Emergency Rental Assistance Program funds may not be used to duplicate other government assistance. In other words, this program cannot provide assistance for any rent/utility payments that were previously covered by other assistance programs, including the Leon CARES Individual Assistance Program in 2020.



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**Q: When/how do I apply for assistance through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program?**

A: The Leon County Emergency Rental Assistance Portal will be open as of March 29, 2021 for application submissions. The application portal can be found [here](#). The application window will be open as long as funding remains available.

**Q: Who can I contact for questions or assistance with the online portal?**

A: A call center is available to assist applicants with questions regarding the Emergency Rental Assistance Program at (855) 216-9470 (toll free), available 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Citizens who need computer access may visit any Leon County Library location. In addition, FREE one-on-one assistance with your application is available at the following locations:

<p><b>Leon County Amtrak Building</b> 918 Railroad Avenue Tallahassee, FL 32310</p> <hr/> <p>Hours of Operation: Monday.....8AM-5PM Tuesday.....8AM-5PM Wednesday.....8AM-5PM Thursday.....8AM-5PM Friday.....8AM-5PM Saturday..... Closed Sunday..... Closed</p>	<p><b>Leon County Main Library</b> 200 W. Park Avenue Tallahassee, FL 32301</p> <hr/> <p>Hours of Operation: Monday.....10AM-7PM Tuesday.....10AM-7PM Wednesday.....10AM-7PM Thursday.....10AM-7PM Friday.....10AM-5PM Saturday.....10AM-5PM Sunday.....1PM-6PM</p>
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**Q: If I am a home owner, can I receive assistance for past due utilities or mortgage payments?**

A: No. Per U.S. Department of the Treasury guidance, only households that are obligated to pay rent on a residential unit are eligible for assistance through the Emergency Rental Assistance program.

**Q: Am I eligible to receive assistance with future rent?**

A: Applicants may request assistance with up to three (3) months of future rent and/or utility payments and must agree to remain in their household for the same period if future rent/utility assistance is awarded. To be eligible for assistance with future rent payments, a tenant applicant must demonstrate that they are past due, and the tenant’s landlord must also agree to accept payment from Leon County on behalf of the tenant for the same period.



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## **Q: What documentation do I need to apply?**

A: The following documents are required as part of the application process:

- Valid Photo ID for the primary applicant
  - » Acceptable forms of identification include a picture or scanned copy of the front of a valid Florida driver's license, learner's permit, Florida identification card, passport, or military ID
- Lease or Rental Agreement
  - » Documentation submitted must include the following information: address, name of primary household members, name of landlord/property manager, lease start date, lease end date (if applicable), monthly rental amount due, late fee terms, and signature page
- Most Recent Utility Bill (*only if Talquin Electric is your utility service provider*)
  - » If the City of Tallahassee Utilities is your utility service provider, Leon County will obtain your most recent utility bill directly from the City of Tallahassee
- Proof of Household Income (see the next section for acceptable forms of household income documentation)

## **Q: How will my household income be verified?**

A: To demonstrate income eligibility, applicants may submit any of the following documents:

- Option #1: Signed 2020 tax return
  - » Applicant must provide tax returns for each adult household member (for example, if a married couple files their taxes separately, a tax return must be submitted for both spouses).
- Option #2: Determination letter from another government assistance program
  - » Leon County will accept proof of current enrollment in any of the following programs: Free and Reduced Meals; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); or Section 8 Housing Assistance.
  - » *Please note that if you use this option to verify your household income, your household will be considered at the 80% AMI level for prioritization purposes.*
- Option #3: Signed 2019 tax return
  - » If the applicant has not yet filed their taxes for calendar year 2020, Leon County will accept signed 2019 tax returns. In this case, the applicant must attest that their income did not increase during calendar year 2020.
  - » As above, the applicant must provide tax returns for each adult household member (for example, if a married couple files their taxes separately, a tax return must be submitted for both spouses).



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- Option #4: Household Income Attestation form
  - » If the applicant's total household income is zero, or if the applicant cannot provide documentation under any of the other options above, applicants may submit a Household Income Attestation form. ***This form can only be completed by a case worker at a participating local human service agency*** (a list of participating agencies can be found at the end of this FAQ document).

**Q: How do I know whether my household income is below the 80% or 50% Area Median Income threshold?**

A: To understand whether your household is below the 80% or 50% Area Median Income (AMI) level, check the table below. Find the row which represents your total household size (including children) and then compare your household's total 2020 annual income to the number in the "80% AMI Threshold" and "50% AMI Threshold" columns.

*For example, if there are 7 total members of your household and your household earned less than \$72,150 in 2020, your household would be within the 80% AMI threshold. If your household earned less than \$45,100 in 2020, you would also be within the 50% AMI threshold.*

Leon County's Area Median Income (AMI) Thresholds by Number of Persons in Household		
Household Size	80% AMI Threshold	50% AMI Threshold
1 person	\$40,750	\$25,450
2 persons	\$46,550	\$29,100
3 persons	\$52,350	\$32,750
4 persons	\$58,150	\$36,350
5 persons	\$62,850	\$39,300
6 persons	\$67,500	\$42,200
7 persons	\$72,150	\$45,100
8+ persons	\$76,800	\$48,000

*As defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*



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**Q: How will Leon County determine my total past due rent balance?**

A: Leon County will work with the tenant’s landlord or property manager to verify the amount of past-due rent owed. The landlord or property manager will submit past due rent documentation directly to Leon County through the Emergency Rental Assistance Landlord application.

**Q: Can I apply for assistance with only my past due utilities?**

A: Yes. Eligible households may submit an application for utilities assistance alone. Households seeking assistance with only past due utilities will not require a landlord to submit an ERA Landlord application.

**Q: If approved, will assistance be disbursed directly to me or to my landlord or utility provider?**

A: Upon application approval, funding awards will be processed and distributed by Leon County directly to the applicant’s landlord and/or utility service provider.

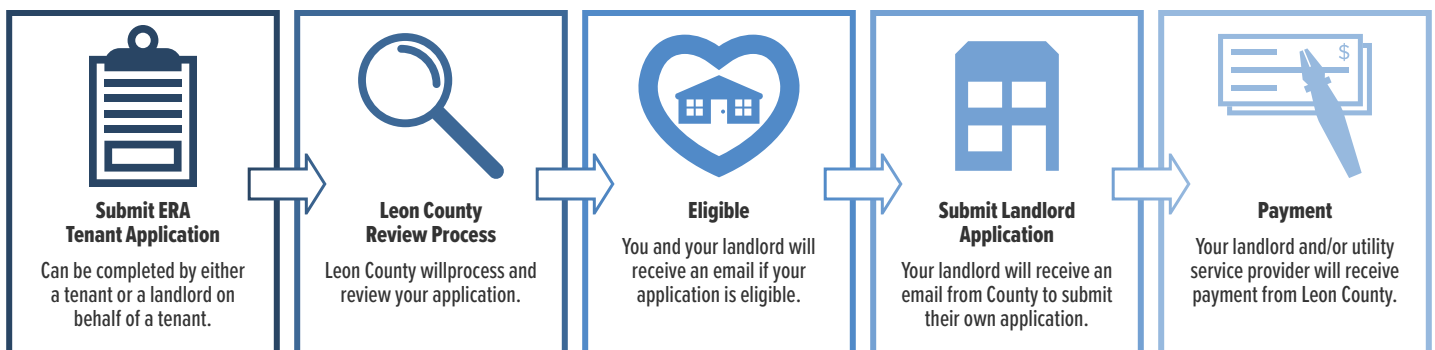
As part of the application process, landlords will be asked to complete and submit a Leon County Substitute W-9 form (located here). Landlords will submit this document through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program application portal.

**Q: Will I be able to save and come back to my application?**

A: Yes. Once you have started an application, you’ll be able save your progress and log-in later to resume your application. Please note that funding is limited and starting or submitting an application does not guarantee assistance.

**Q: What happens after I submit my application?**

A: You will receive an e-mail from [no-reply@neighborlysoftware.com](mailto:no-reply@neighborlysoftware.com) confirming that you have submitted your application. From there, Leon County’s processing team will review your application for completion and follow-up via e-mail to receive missing documents or additional information that may be needed. The graphic below illustrates the Emergency Rental Assistance Program application process:





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**Q: Does my landlord need to sign my application?**

A: Landlords are required to submit and sign their own portion of the application independent of a tenant's application.

**Q: How and when does my landlord submit their portion of the Emergency Rental Assistance application?**

A: After Leon County determines a tenant applicant to be eligible for the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program, we will send the tenant's landlord an e-mail invitation with a link to their portion of the application. E-mail invitations will be sent only after a tenant is determined to be eligible for the ERA program and will be sent from a Leon County e-mail address. More information on the ERA Landlord application can be found [here](#).

Please note that all awards are subject to funding availability; applying for assistance does not guarantee funding.

**Q: Can my landlord submit an Emergency Rental Assistance Tenant application on my behalf?**

A: Per U.S. Department of the Treasury guidelines, a landlord may submit an application for rental assistance on behalf of an eligible household. There are two ways for landlords to submit an application for rental assistance on behalf of an eligible household:

(1) Assist the tenant with an Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Tenant application

- We encourage landlords to communicate with and assist their tenants with the online ERA Tenant application.
- If a tenant is determined to be eligible for the ERA program, Leon County will send an e-mail invitation to the tenant's landlord (using the e-mail address provided by the tenant), which will allow landlords to submit banking information and past-due rent information directly to the County.
- Landlords and tenants may visit one of the Leon County ERA Assistance Centers (see the related question on Page 2 of this FAQ document) for one-on-one support with the ERA application process.

(2) A tenant may add their landlord as a designated "user" of the tenant's application

- A tenant may grant complete access of their ERA Tenant application to a landlord by adding the landlord as a designated "user" within the application portal.
- Please note that any added designated users will have full access to view the tenant's application and will also have the ability to update all application responses. If using this method, the tenant must still submit and sign the final page of the application.



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- To add a landlord as a designated user, a tenant applicant should follow these steps:
  1. Create an account in the Leon County ERA portal
  2. Start an Emergency Rental Assistance Tenant application
  3. Click 'View Users' on the left side of the screen
  4. Click 'Add a User' in the center of the screen
  5. Type the landlord's e-mail address into the 'E-mail' box
  6. Click the blue '+ Add' button
  7. The added Landlord should receive an e-mail from Neighborly Software with a link to access and edit the tenant's application

**Q: I have not received any e-mails from Leon County. What do I do?**

A: All correspondence for this program is via e-mail, so please check your spam e-mail folder if you have not received any e-mails from Neighborly Software or Leon County. If you believe there may be a system error with your application, please call our call center at (855) 216-9470 (toll-free).

**Q: How can I check on the status of my application?**

A: Tenant and Landlord applicants can check the status of their applications by logging in through the online portal [here](#).

**Q: I'm ineligible for the Individual Assistance Program, is other local assistance available?**

A: If deemed ineligible for the Leon County Emergency Rental Assistance program, residents in need of assistance can contact 2-1-1 Big Bend to receive information about other local resources available by calling 2-1-1 or by visiting their website [here](#).



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## Have additional questions?

The Leon County Emergency Rental Assistance Program website will be updated regularly with new questions and more information about the program. Please continue to check back for updates.

In the meantime, a call center is also available to assist residents with questions regarding the Leon County ERA program. Citizens may reach the call center at **(855) 216-9470** between 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Also, FREE one-on-one assistance with your application is available at the following locations:

<p><b>Leon County Amtrak Building</b> 918 Railroad Avenue Tallahassee, FL 32310</p> <hr/> <p>Hours of Operation:</p> <p>Monday.....8AM-5PM Tuesday .....8AM-5PM Wednesday.....8AM-5PM Thursday.....8AM-5PM Friday.....8AM-5PM Saturday ..... Closed Sunday..... Closed</p>	<p><b>Leon County Main Library</b> 200 W. Park Avenue Tallahassee, FL 32301</p> <hr/> <p>Hours of Operation:</p> <p>Monday.....10AM-7PM Tuesday .....10AM-7PM Wednesday.....10AM-7PM Thursday.....10AM-7PM Friday.....10AM-5PM Saturday ..... 10AM-5PM Sunday.....1PM-6PM</p>
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*If you do not meet the eligibility criteria for the Leon County Emergency Rental Assistance Program, you can still receive information about other resources that may be available to you from 2-1-1 Big Bend. Just dial **2-1-1** or visit **[www.211bigbend.org](http://www.211bigbend.org)**.*



# List of Participating Agencies for Household Income Attestation

If your total household income is zero, or if you cannot provide either a signed 2020 Tax Return or a determination letter from another government assistance program, you may submit a Household Income Attestation form to verify your household income. ***This form can only be completed by a case worker at one of the participating local human service agencies listed below.*** Please note that these agencies will complete a Household Income Attestation form for their established clients only; please do not contact an agency if you are not a client.

## Agencies Supporting Household Income Attestation

Ability 1st (Center for Independent Living of North FL)	John G. Riley Center & Museum
Alzheimers Project	Kids Incorporated of the Big Bend
Americas Second Harvest of the Big Bend	Legal Aid Foundation of the Tallahassee Bar Association
Big Bend Cares	Legal Services of North Florida
Big Bend Habitat for Humanity	Lighthouse of the Big Bend
Big Bend Homeless Coalition	Lincoln Center Foundation
Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Big Bend	Loved by Jesus Family Church
Bond Community Health Center	Miccosukee Youth Education Foundation
Boys Town North Florida	Neighborhood Medical Center
Brehon Institute for Family Services	PACE Center for Girls
Capital Area Community Action Agency	Pivotal Point Enterprises
Capital City Youth Services	Refuge House
Capital Medical Society Foundation	Sickle Cell Foundation
CESC	Smith-Williams Service Center Foundation
Delta Kappa Omega Foundation	Special Olympics Florida-Leon County
Dream Builders Greatness Center	Tallahassee Senior Citizens Foundation
Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Region	The Boys and Girls Clubs of the Big Bend
Emergency Care Help Organization	Dick Howser Center for Childhood Svcs. (The Learning Pavilion)
Epilepsy Agency of the Big Bend	The Oasis Center for Women and Girls
FSU Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement	The Salvation Army of Tallahassee
Good News Outreach	Turn About, Inc. of Tallahassee