

Nueces County Launches \$1.6 Million Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Nueces County is seeking to reach as many eligible applicants as quickly as possible.

Nueces County has \$1,696,729.83 in available funding to provide direct assistance through a locally administered program, the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP).

The program is designed to provide emergency rental and utility cost assistance to individuals and households who are at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Safe and stable shelter is the cornerstone of all other basic needs. If you have a place you call home, you can find a job, go to school, go to work, and take care of your family,” said Barbara Canales, Nueces County Judge. “The most economically vulnerable paid the highest price during this pandemic: they were more likely to get sick, or have a sick family member, and they were the most likely to experience a job loss or reduced income.”

“We need to protect our most vulnerable, because we know when people have a roof over their head, they can get back on their feet. The Emergency Rental Assistance Program - ERAP - is here to bring help for those who need it. I encourage renters and landlords who have suffered economic losses due to COVID to apply for assistance as soon as possible.”

Program Overview

Eligible applicants may receive assistance for rental arrears, forward rent payments, utility arrears, current utility costs, and other related expenses. The total number of months covered by the program, for arrears, current and forward payments combined, may not exceed 15 months for each form of assistance.

Rental payments under the program are made to landlords, property owners, or management companies but, in certain circumstances, may be made to the tenant. Utility cost assistance will be provided in the form of a check paid to the utility provider or the tenant.

Many applicants may be contacted by the program based on participation in similar programs. Nueces County has previously supported households financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The County will work to transition eligible applicants into the program to address any remaining needs.

Assistance Provided

The program provides financial assistance to cover the cost of rent and utility costs for Nueces County tenants who are behind on their rent, utility payments, and/or are at risk of eviction due to COVID-19. Eligible uses of funds are defined by guidance from the U.S. Treasury and are limited to:

- Rental arrears dating back as early as April 1, 2020.

- Forward rent paid in increments of up to three months. After each three-month period, applicants may apply to recertify that they continue to meet the program’s eligibility requirements for up to an additional three months of forward rent. All past due amounts will be considered arrears at the time of recertification and will be paid as arrears, not counting towards the three-month limit on forward rent.
- The program will reimburse monthly rental amounts up to a maximum of 120% of U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) FY 2021 fair market rents (FMRs) based on unit size.
- The total number of months covered by the program, for both arrears and forward rent combined, may not exceed 15 months.
- Utility and home energy costs incurred as early as April 1, 2020, including the following:
 - Electricity
 - Natural gas
 - Propane
 - Water
 - Sewer
 - Trash removal
 - Energy costs (e.g., fuel oil)
- Utility cost assistance is provided in the form of direct payment to utility providers to cover current utility charges and arrears up to 15 months.
- The total number of months covered by the program, for both arrears and current utility charges combined, may not exceed 15 months.
- “Other expenses” as defined by U.S. Treasury guidance, including:
 - Reasonable accrued late fees up to 15% of the total amount of rent or Internet service
 - Relocation expenses (including prospective relocation expenses), such as rental security deposits, and rental fees, which may include application or screening fees

Per federal statute, program funds cannot be used for mortgage assistance.

Application Submission

The program is utilizing an Applicant Portal, www.nuecescountyrap.com, that can be accessed by both landlords and tenants online. Applicants may also call 361-724-3085 with any further questions.

For those unable to apply online, please visit the La Retama Central Library at 805 Comanche Street. Applications will be accepted at the La Retama Central Library on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Hours on Saturdays are from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Nueces County is also working on setting up application informational sessions at varying community centers. Watch for updates on the Nueces County website to see if an informational session is coming to a community center near you!

About ERAP Funding

The program is funded through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program established by section 501 of Division N of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Pub. L. No. 116-260 (Dec. 27, 2020).

Learn more about nationwide Emergency Rental Assistance Programs [here](#). Stay tuned for more information about Nueces County's ERAP.