

WHAT
YOU
NEED
TO
KNOW?



A guide to understanding your rights and options during the COVID-19 pandemic as it pertains to rent, eviction, and utility information.

Prepared by:



Rent/Eviction Information

Prohibition on evictions per Governor Hogan's Emergency Order—There is currently an emergency order which prohibits Maryland courts from ordering the eviction of any tenant who can show their failure to pay rent was the result of COVID-19, including, without limitation, due to job loss, reduction in compensated hours of work, closure of place of employment, or the need to miss work to care for a home-bound school-age child.

Please note: the fact the tenant (or anyone in the household permitted by the lease) has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 or is under investigation for COVID-19 are **not** recognized reasons which will prevent an eviction.

Under this order you are still expected to pay your monthly rent payment. If you are struggling to make the payment, pay as much as you can and contact your landlord to let them know what is going on and make arrangements for a payment plan. **Rent is one of the types of necessities for which the stimulus check you may receive in the coming weeks/month is intended. Please be responsible and use these funds to pay for your basic needs, such as rent, utilities, and food.**

Utility Information

Should I still pay my utility bill during the suspension of terminations and late fees?

Yes! You should make every effort to stay current on all utility payments...even if they are only partial payments. You will still receive your utility bill each month. Once the suspension is lifted, you will be responsible for all utility usage and bill payments. If you experience a loss of income due to COVID-19 restrictions and have trouble paying your bill, contact your utility provider to discuss payment arrangements.

How can I get assistance with my utility bill(s)?

CAC is Washington County's local administering agency for The State of Maryland's Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP). OHEP provides bill assistance to low-income households in Washington County to make their energy costs more affordable and to help with the prevention of loss and the restoration of home energy service.

OHEP provides assistance to help residents:

- ⇒ **STAY WARM: The Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP)** provides assistance grants to help with home heating bills. Payments are made to the fuel supplier and utility company on the customer's behalf.
- ⇒ **STAY CONNECTED: The Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP)** provides financial assistance with electric bills. Eligible customers receive help that pays a portion of their current electric bills. Some EUSP participants may qualify for assistance with past due electric bills as well as referrals to energy efficiency programs. Customers who receive EUSP are placed on a budget billing plan with their utility company.
- ⇒ **PAY PAST DUE BILLS: Arrearage Retirement Assistance** helps customers with large, past due electric and/or gas bills. If eligible, customers may receive forgiveness of up to \$2,000 towards their past due bills. Customers must have a past due bill of \$300 or greater to be considered eligible. Customers may only receive an arrearage grant once every seven years, with certain exceptions.

Who is eligible?

Any Washington County resident who meets the current income guidelines (**see next page**) is eligible for energy assistance.

How do I apply?

As the state responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, OHEP will continue to accept applications and process benefit payments. In order to limit person-to-person contact, there are several ways you may apply:

- ⇒ **Online:** At this time, this is the most reliable option. Apply online at www.mydhrbenefits.dhr.state.md.us
- ⇒ **Phone:** You may call CAC, your local OHEP office, to request assistance completing an application over the phone or to request an application be mailed to you if you do not have internet access. Call 301-797-4161 x300 and leave a message. Someone will return your call.
- ⇒ **Mail-in or Drop-off:** You may continue to mail or drop off applications to CAC for processing.

For more information or to download the list of instructions, needed documentation, and the energy assistance application go to: <http://www.wccac.org/services/energy-programs/>

To check the status of your energy assistance application go to: <https://www.myohepstatus.org/>

FY 2020 OHEP Eligibility Guidelines for MEAP and EUSP		
Your eligibility is based on the GROSS (before taxes) income of your household		
Household Size	Maximum Monthly Income	Maximum Yearly Income
1	\$1,821	\$21,858
2	\$2,400	\$29,593
3	\$3,030	\$37,328
4	\$4,290	\$45,063
5	\$4,920	\$52,798
6	\$5,550	\$60,533
7	\$5,689	\$68,268
8	\$6,334	\$76,003
For each Additional person add	\$645	\$7,740

Apply to Fuel Fund of Maryland

The Fuel Fund of Maryland aims to be a lifeline for vulnerable Maryland residents struggling with a home utility hardship. The Fuel Fund assists by providing navigation through an array of financial, educational, and community resources which empower, engage, and safely connect a household in times of crisis.

Online: Apply online at www.fuefundmaryland.org

Phone: If you cannot apply online, call 410-235-9080 X1, Mon/Wed/Fri, 10 am—12 pm.

Maryland Office of People's Council

- ⇒ OPC is the official advocate for Maryland residential utility consumers
- ⇒ OPC represents the interests of Maryland residential utility consumers of electricity, natural gas, telecommunications and private water services in state and federal regulatory and legislative proceedings. OPC also provides information and referrals to consumers and agencies, and direct assistance in limited situations.
- ⇒ OPC represents the interests of Maryland residential utility consumers before administrative agencies, the court and the legislature
- ⇒ OPC does not administer any grants or other funds to assist with utility bills, although we can provide referrals to other assistance agencies. If you are off service or have received a service termination notice, you must contact the office by telephone.
- ⇒ Phone: 410-767-8150 / 800-207-4055
- ⇒ Website: <http://opc.maryland.gov/>

Washington County Community Action Council, Inc.

117 Summit Avenue - Hagerstown MD 21740

301-797-4161

Email: info@wccac.org

Website: www.wccac.org

Current hours of operation: M-F 10 am—2 pm