

## CityFHEPS Frequently Asked Questions

### (For Residents of Department of Homeless Services or Human Resources Administration Shelters or Those Experiencing Street Homelessness)

This document provides general information about the CityFHEPS program. This information is for households who are currently in shelter or experiencing street homelessness and are applying for CityFHEPS for the first time. It is not meant to provide full details about the operation of the CityFHEPS program.

#### What is CityFHEPS?

CityFHEPS is a rental assistance program to help individuals and families find and keep housing. It is administered by the Department of Social Services (DSS), which includes both the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and the Human Resources Administration (HRA).

#### Can I get CityFHEPS if I am in an HRA or DHS Shelter?

Not every individual or family who is currently in shelter will qualify for the program. If you are moving out of a DHS or HRA shelter, your household must not have lived in the residence that you are now moving to at any time within the past year.

In order to get CityFHEPS, your household must meet the following requirements:

- a. Must have a gross income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level\*,
- b. Be on Cash Assistance, if eligible;
- c. Not qualify for any other rental assistance program, including FHEPS;
- ★ If you are a Single Adult making minimum wage and work at least 35 hours per week, your gross income can be more than 200% of the federal poverty level.

#### AND

1. It must meet **one** of the following requirements:
  - a. Be a family living in a DHS shelter \*; **OR**
  - b. Be a single Adult living in a DHS shelter \*;
  - c. Reside in an HRA shelter \*;
  - d. Reside in a DHS shelter and be eligible for HRA shelter \*;
- ★ If you are moving out of a DHS or HRA shelter, your household must not have lived in the residence that you are now moving to at any time within the past year.

#### AND

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2. It **also** meets **one** of the following additional requirements:
  - a. The household includes an adult who had been working (subsidized or unsubsidized) 10 hours per week for the last 30 days;
  - b. Someone in the household has a disability (receives federal disability benefits or is in receipt of ongoing Cash Assistance and is on the WeCARE SSI track);
  - c. Someone in the household is 60 years of age or older;
  - d. Someone 18 or over is exempt from Cash Assistance work requirements because they are needed at home to care for a disabled family member;
  - e. The household includes someone who served in the U.S. Armed Forces.
  - f. The household is living in a DHS shelter that is about to close.
  - g. The household was referred by a CityFHEPS qualifying program, and DSS determined that CityFHEPS was needed to shorten shelter stay. (If you are in DHS shelter and this applies to you, your case manager will see a note in your case record).

If you are moving out of a DHS or HRA shelter, your household must not have lived in the residence that you are now moving to at any time within the past year. If you have any questions about CityFHEPS and your eligibility, you should talk to your housing specialist or case manager.

**Can I get help paying the application fees for my apartment if I am living in a DHS shelter?**

If you are living in a DHS shelter, we can possibly pay the application fees for your apartment. Speak to your case manager if you need this help.

**Can I get CityFHEPS if I am experiencing street homelessness?**

If you are experiencing street homelessness, staying in a drop-in center, or living in a transitional housing setting, you need to be receiving services from a DHS contracted provider in order to be eligible for CityFHEPS. You can also be eligible for CityFHEPS if you're residing in permanent housing after being placed out of a drop-in center, transitional housing setting, or directly from the street.

You must still meet the following basic CityFHEPS eligibility criteria:

1. Must have a gross income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level\*,
  2. Be on Cash Assistance, if eligible;
  3. Not qualify for any other rental assistance program;
- ★ If you are a Single Adult making minimum wage and work at least 35 hours per week, your gross income can be more than 200% of the federal poverty level.

If you have any questions about CityFHEPS and your eligibility, you should talk to your housing specialist or case manager.

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### **How will I know I am eligible for CityFHEPS?**

You will know that you might be eligible for CityFHEPS when you receive the “Shopping Letter” and “Household Share Letter.” These letters are issued by DSS and will be provided to you by your housing specialist or case manager. Once you have these letters, you can start to look for housing.

Once you find housing, you must tell your housing specialist or case manager. They will help you submit the required documents so that DSS can determine if you are eligible for CityFHEPS and if your housing qualifies for the program.

### **Do I have to be on Cash Assistance to get CityFHEPS?**

If your household is eligible for Cash Assistance, you have to be receiving those benefits. Additionally, you cannot have a “sanction” on your case. A sanction is when you, or someone in your household, do not comply with HRA rules and your household gets less benefits. If you or someone else in your household has a sanction, you must go to your DSS/HRA Benefits Access Center to clear it before you can get CityFHEPS.

### **How long can I keep getting CityFHEPS?**

The CityFHEPS program generally provides for up to four annual renewals, with additional extensions available for “good cause.”

This five-year maximum does not apply to households that include someone who is 60 years old or older, or that include an adult who receives federal disability benefits. Renewals are subject to households continuing to meet eligibility requirements and the continued availability of funding.

### **What do I do with the Shopping and Household Share Letters?**

Once you have been identified as possibly eligible to receive CityFHEPS by DSS, your case manager or housing specialist will give you two documents: a Shopping Letter and a Household Share Letter.

Receiving these letters does not mean that you are definitely eligible for CityFHEPS. It only means that you are potentially eligible for CityFHEPS. Your eligibility for the program will only be determined once you have found a qualifying apartment, single room occupancy (SRO) unit, or room and your case manager or housing specialist submits a package of required documents to DSS.

Once you’ve received the Shopping and Household Share Letters, review and discuss them with your case manager or housing specialist. If the personal and income information on these letters is accurate, your case manager or housing specialist will begin to help you look for permanent housing.

### **What do I do with the Shopping and Household Share Letters (*continued*)?**

It is your responsibility to look for and find housing. When looking, you should consider carefully what is most important to you. For example, you may need to be near family, school, doctors, etc.

### **How do these letters help me find housing?**

As you look for housing and speak with landlords, the Shopping Letter will serve as a guide for you, your potential landlord, and any broker you might work with.

The Shopping Letter will tell you, the landlord, and/or a broker:

- The highest amount of rent CityFHEPS will allow for your household size and housing type options (i.e. apartment, room, SRO);
- Some of the financial incentives that DSS may offer to the landlord or broker; *and*
- The types of documentation that are needed from the landlord or broker to continue the CityFHEPS eligibility assessment.

The Household Share Letter is **for your use only**. It is **not** meant to be shared with potential landlords or brokers.

The Household Share Letter tells you:

- Your potential CityFHEPS rental assistance supplement amount;
- How much of the rent you might have to pay (your “household share”); *and*
- The reasons we have found you potentially eligible to receive CityFHEPS.

This letter also details the household income information that DSS has on file for you and/or your household. It is important that you review this information to make sure it is right. If you are approved for CityFHEPS you will receive a letter from DSS with your final household share. If your information changed from when you received your Household Share Letter, the amount your Approval Letter says you will have to pay may be different. Your Approval Letter has the correct amount you have to pay.

### **What kind of housing can I rent using CityFHEPS? Where can I use my CityFHEPS?**

You can use CityFHEPS to rent an entire apartment anywhere within New York State. You can also use CityFHEPS to rent a single room in an apartment or an SRO unit that is within the five (5) boroughs of New York City. The rent and utility amounts provided on this document are only valid if you move within New York City. If you are considering moving to an apartment that is outside of New York City, but within New York State, please go to the DSS CityFHEPS website to find the statewide amounts at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/cityfheps-documents.page>.

SRO units are only available for households with one adult. The maximum rent that CityFHEPS will allow within New York City is \$1,967 per month.

A single room is available to a household of no more than two adults. The maximum rent that CityFHEPS will allow within New York City is \$1,100 per month.

**What kind of housing can I rent using CityFHEPS? Where can I use my CityFHEPS (continued)?**

The payment standards are the maximum amount of subsidy that HRA will pay to the owner or landlord on behalf of the CityFHEPS tenant. HRA’s payment standards are based on the Section 8 standard adopted by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA).

These payment standards vary based on the number of bedrooms and whether all or some utilities are included. Make sure you know which utilities, if any, are included in the rent. The table below shows the maximums HRA will pay based on the number of bedrooms and the types of utilities that are included in the rent, if any.

The payment standard also refers to the maximum number of bedrooms that HRA will subsidize. Payment standards are based solely on the number of people residing in the assisted household. HRA will pay for one bedroom/sleeping area for every two people. For example, if there are 3 people, HRA will pay for a 2 bedroom as that will allow for 2 people in one sleeping area and 1 in another.

The amounts on the chart below are only valid if you move within New York City. If you are considering moving outside of New York City, but within New York State, please go to the DSS CityFHEPS website to find the statewide amounts at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/cityfheps-documents.page>.

<b>Family Size</b>	<b>Number of Bedrooms</b>	<b>All Utilities Included</b>	<b>Without Cooking Gas &amp; Electric</b>	<b>With Cooking Gas Only</b>	<b>With Electric Only</b>	<b>No Utilities Included</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>\$1,967</b>	<b>\$1,868</b>	<b>\$1,893</b>	<b>\$1,942</b>	<b>\$1,783</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>0 (Studio)</b>	<b>\$2,624</b>	<b>\$2,525</b>	<b>\$2,550</b>	<b>\$2,599</b>	<b>\$2,440</b>
<b>1 or 2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$2,696</b>	<b>\$2,584</b>	<b>\$2,612</b>	<b>\$2,668</b>	<b>\$2,484</b>
<b>3 or 4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>\$3,027</b>	<b>\$2,885</b>	<b>\$2,918</b>	<b>\$2,994</b>	<b>\$2,762</b>
<b>5 or 6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>\$3,777</b>	<b>\$3,606</b>	<b>\$3,643</b>	<b>\$3,740</b>	<b>\$3,464</b>
<b>7 or 8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>\$4,070</b>	<b>\$3,868</b>	<b>\$3,910</b>	<b>\$4,028</b>	<b>\$3,705</b>
<b>9 or 10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>\$4,680</b>	<b>\$4,448</b>	<b>\$4,494</b>	<b>\$4,634</b>	<b>\$4,263</b>
<b>11 or 12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>\$5,291</b>	<b>\$5,059</b>	<b>\$5,105</b>	<b>\$5,245</b>	<b>\$4,874</b>
<b>13 or 14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>\$5,901</b>	<b>\$5,669</b>	<b>\$5,715</b>	<b>\$5,855</b>	<b>\$5,484</b>
<b>15 or 16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>\$6,512</b>	<b>\$6,280</b>	<b>\$6,326</b>	<b>\$6,466</b>	<b>\$6,095</b>
<b>17 or 18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>\$7,122</b>	<b>\$6,890</b>	<b>\$6,936</b>	<b>\$7,076</b>	<b>\$6,705</b>
<b>19 or 20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>\$7,733</b>	<b>\$7,501</b>	<b>\$7,547</b>	<b>\$7,687</b>	<b>\$7,316</b>

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**What if I find an apartment with fewer bedrooms than what is on my shopping letter?**

HRA will pay the standard based on the actual rental, not the shopping letter. For example, if your shopping letter says you can rent an apartment with 3 bedrooms, but you rent an apartment with 2 bedrooms, we would pay up to the standard for a 2-bedroom apartment. If you have questions about a particular unit you are viewing or any special circumstances you may encounter, ask your case manager to escalate the unit for review.

**What if I find an apartment with more bedrooms than what is on my shopping letter?**

HRA will pay the standard based on the maximum unit size for your household. For example, if your shopping letter says you can rent an apartment with 2 bedrooms, you may rent an apartment with 3 bedrooms as long as it meets the payment standard for a 2-bedroom apartment (if you are moving within New York City, the payment standard for a 2-bedroom apartment is \$3,027).

**What if I find an apartment where the rent amount is the same as with all the utilities, but the utilities are not included? Can I make a deal with the landlord to lower the rent and I pay the difference?**

HRA will not pay the amount for an apartment with utilities if they are not being provided by the landlord. Landlords must fill out a form telling HRA which utilities, if any, are being provided. And no, side deals with a landlord are not allowed.

**Does DSS have any other requirements for the apartment/unit?**

Yes. Similar to Section 8, all rents must pass a rent reasonableness test, meaning the rent charged cannot be more than other similar units in the neighborhood. The rent reasonableness test will be done after all paperwork is submitted to DSS.

**How is the amount I have to pay in rent determined?**

The amount you have to pay in rent is determined by a number of factors. These include your household size and the income of each household member.

**How will I know what CityFHEPS is going to pay my landlord and how much I will have to pay?**

If you are approved for CityFHEPS, we will send you an approval notice detailing how much we will pay your landlord and how much you must pay.

**How do the monthly payments work?**

DSS will issue a check to your landlord each month for the CityFHEPS portion of your rent.

**What if my lease says all rent has to be paid by a certain date or there will be late fees?**

As long as the payment is made in the month that the rent is due, it is not considered late. A landlord may still try to charge late fees however you cannot be evicted just for late fees.

**Can the landlord take me to court over late fees?**

The landlord cannot take you to housing court successfully just for late fees. The landlord also cannot take you to small claims court for late fees charged for the CityFHEPS portion of the rent. However, they can take you to small claims court if your portion is late and late fees have been charged. If you are having trouble paying your household share contact Homebase to see what help may be available. Call **311** to find the Homebase location closes to you.

**Do I have the right to stay in the same housing unit for as long as I receive CityFHEPS?**

In general, if you are in a rent-regulated unit, you can stay in your unit. Otherwise, your right to stay in your unit is based on the terms of your lease.

**What if my income changes and I can't pay my contribution?**

You can submit a modification request to HRA with your new income documentation attached. You can find the Request for a Modification to your CityFHEPS Rental Assistance Supplement Amount available online at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/cityfheps-documents.page>.

**When can my rent increase?**

If you are in a rent-regulated apartment, your rent can only increase by the amount allowed by law. If you are not in a rent-regulated unit, your landlord may increase your rent on lease renewal. You can submit a signed lease with the rent increase amount with your renewal or you can use the Request for a Modification to your CityFHEPS Rental Assistance Supplement Amount available online at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/cityfheps-documents.page>.

**What if my landlord says I have to pay extra money?**

Your landlord cannot ask you to pay more than what we have determined is your household share unless your shelter allowance goes down. If this happens, you will have to make up that difference. Your landlord cannot ask you to pay a security deposit because DSS is giving them a voucher for security. If your landlord asks you to pay more money, please tell your case manager or housing specialist.

**What if a landlord says they won't take CityFHEPS?**

Landlords/brokers cannot refuse to rent to you because you are receiving CityFHEPS. This is called "Source of Income" discrimination and it is unlawful in New York City. If a landlord is refusing to rent to you because you receive CityFHEPS, please call the NYC Commission on Human Rights at 212-416-0197.

**Who should I call if I need help or have a question about CityFHEPS?**

You should speak with your case manager or housing specialist first about any questions you may have.

**What happens if I have trouble paying my rent or have any other housing issues after I leave the shelter?**

After you leave the shelter, if you live in NYC, you can contact Homebase for aftercare services. Contact them immediately if you have trouble paying your rent, including any rent increase on lease renewal. Call **311** to find the Homebase location closest to you or call your non-residential provider. If you are living outside of NYC but within NYS, please call 718-557-1399.



### **You Should Know**

- A landlord or broker may not refuse to accept CityFHEPS. Refusal to accept CityFHEPS may constitute source of income discrimination under the NYC Human Rights Law or NYS Human Rights Law.
- Side deals are prohibited. A side deal is when a landlord or broker asks you for additional up front or ongoing payments.
- If a landlord or broker refuses CityFHEPS or asks you for a side deal, call the NYC Commission on Human Rights at 212-416-0197.
- The HRA security voucher is considered payment of security. A landlord or broker should not ask you to pay any additional monies for security.
- Brokers should not ask you to pay any additional broker fees because DSS is paying your broker's fee.
- Your landlord cannot force you to move to a different unit.
- Call the NYC Commission on Human Rights at 212-416-0197 immediately if the unit you viewed at your walkthrough is not the same unit you are offered at the time you move in.

*CityFHEPS is similar to the federal Section 8 program in that, subject to the availability of funding, it provides assistance, including rental assistance of specified amounts, to landlords and tenants who want to form a landlord-tenant relationship. Any contractual relationship will be solely between each tenant participating in the program and each tenant's landlord participating in the program.*