



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

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DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER – ACF POST-DISASTER HOUSING ASSISTANCE

DCL #: OHSEPR-DCL-2023-02

DATE: August 21, 2023

TO: Emergency Managers; State, Tribal, Local, Territorial Human Service Entities; Case Managers

FROM: Office of Human Services Emergency Preparedness and Response
Office of Community Services
Office of Family Assistance

SUBJECT: ACF Programs that Provide Post-Disaster Housing Assistance

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) is to provide information on four programs operated by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) whose funding may be used to provide post-disaster housing assistance following a natural disaster: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). Funds can be used for temporary housing such as motels or hotels, minor home repairs, cooling centers during the day, or short-term rental or mortgage assistance as outlined below and subject to specific program requirements.

Our goal is to assist emergency managers, state, tribal, local, and territorial (STLT) human service entities, and case managers with finding appropriate and affordable housing for disaster survivors using available funds.

BACKGROUND

Securing post-disaster housing for vulnerable individuals and families after a natural disaster is one of the greatest challenges for emergency managers and caseworkers. Many of these persons are experiencing homelessness or received housing assistance before the disaster. Others are displaced due to damaged or destroyed homes caused by the disaster. Stable housing is critical to a disaster survivor's

recovery and delays in reestablishing housing after a disaster impede all dimensions of individual and household recovery.¹

There are several programs whose funding can be used to provide post-disaster human services. Within HHS/ACF, TANF, CSBG, LIHEAP, and SSBG are federally funded block grant programs that provide a broad array of human services for low-income individuals and families.

ACF's Office of Family Assistance administers the TANF program, which provides funding to states, territories, and tribes to operate programs that offer critical supports to families experiencing economic hardships. TANF is a flexible program that can fund a range of services and benefits to support families in ways provided for in the statute,² including emergency and crisis assistance.

The CSBG, SSBG, and LIHEAP programs are administered by the ACF Office of Community Services (OCS). CSBG provides funds to states, territories, and tribes and over 1,000 Community Action Agencies (CAA) to administer support services including housing, nutrition, utilities, and transportation assistance; employment, education, and other income and asset building services; and crisis and emergency services.³

LIHEAP provides funds to states, territories, and tribes to assist households with energy costs associated with home energy bills (such as heating or cooling), energy crises, weatherization, and minor energy-related home repairs.⁴

SSBG is a flexible funding source that allows states and territories to tailor social services to their population's needs.⁵ SSBG provides funding for 29 social service categories, including housing.⁶

¹ W.G. Peacock, N. Dash, Y. Zhang, and S. Van Zandt (2017). "Post-disaster Sheltering, Temporary Housing and Permanent Housing Recovery." *Handbook of Disaster Research*, Springer, 569–594.

² TANF provides funding to states, Washington, D.C., 75 federally recognized American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native organizations, and the following U.S. territories: Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

³ CSBG is available in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and American Samoa and 66 tribes.

⁴ LIHEAP is available in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands and 150 tribes.

⁵ SSBG funding is available in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands. SSBG does not directly fund any tribes.

⁶ [SSBG Legislation Uniform Definition of Services](#)

ACF PROGRAM INFORMATION ON POST-DISASTER HOUSING

The following chart provides information on TANF, CSBG, LIHEAP, and SSBG block grant programs. Block-grant funding allows states, territories, and tribes to have broad flexibility in the benefits and services they offer. Therefore, the type and availability of post-disaster housing as well as eligibility requirements vary by state, territory, and tribe. The individual or household must meet the grant recipient’s eligibility requirements for benefits.

Programs	Post-Disaster Housing Benefit	Type of Post-Disaster Housing Assistance	Availability of Benefit / Assistance	Eligibility	Form of Benefit	Contact Information	Links for More Information
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	One particularly useful TANF option in an emergency or time of crisis is a non-recurrent, short-term (NRST) benefit. NRST benefits can help to address a specific crisis situation for up to 4 months with aid that is not for ongoing needs. The definition and requirements associated with TANF “assistance” (e.g., work requirements and time limits) do not apply to NRST benefits (45 CFR 260.31).	Examples include hotel vouchers, rental assistance, mortgage payments, security payments, utility payments, moving assistance, housing search and placement services.	Housing assistance and the availability of NRST benefits varies by state, territory, and tribe.	Eligibility requirements vary by state, territory, and tribe. Eligibility for NRST benefits may not be limited to current TANF cash recipients.	Examples include cash, vouchers, and direct payments to vendors.	TANF Program Contact Information	Approaches to Assisting Families Experiencing or At Risk of Homelessness with TANF Funds TANF-ACF-IM-2013 -01 Use of TANF Funds to Serve Homeless Families and Families at Risk of Experiencing Homelessness Using Federal TANF and State Maintenance-of Effort (MOE) Funds for Families in Areas Covered by a Federal or State Disaster Declaration
Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)	LIHEAP assists low-income households in meeting home energy needs. When a disaster occurs, LIHEAP funding may be used to assist LIHEAP eligible households with crisis assistance which may include temporary shelter or housing for individuals whose homes have been destroyed or damaged. LIHEAP funds may not be used for the purchase or improvement of land, or the purchase, construction, or permanent improvement (other than low-cost residential weatherization or	Costs to temporarily shelter or house individuals in hotels, apartments or other living situations in which homes have been destroyed or damaged, i.e., placing people in settings to preserve health and safety and to move them away from the crisis situation. LIHEAP funds may be used for establishing heating/cooling centers, utility reconnection costs, utility deposit and repair	Post-disaster housing assistance varies by state, territory, and tribe.	The household must meet the grant recipient’s LIHEAP eligibility requirements.	Direct payment to vendors is preferred; direct assistance may be provided on a case-by-case basis.	Low-Income Energy Office Search Tool Energy Assistance Hotline LIHEAP Map State and Territory Contact Listing LIHEAP Tribal Contacts	OCS Disaster Flexibilities Hub LIHEAP DCL-2022-11 Heat Stress FY2022 LIHEAP Q & As on Disaster Relief

Programs	Post-Disaster Housing Benefit	Type of Post-Disaster Housing Assistance	Availability of Benefit / Assistance	Eligibility	Form of Benefit	Contact Information	Links for More Information
	other energy-related home repairs) of any building or other facility. ⁷	or replacement of furnace/air conditioner.					
Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)	CSBG provides funding for human services including housing. Community Action Agencies (CAAs) assist low-income families and individuals including those affected by a disaster. CSBG may not be used for the purchase or improvement of land, or the purchase, construction, or permanent improvement (other than low-cost residential weatherization or other energy-related home repairs) of any building or other facility. ⁸	Motels, hotels; rental assistance; cooling centers during the day. The benefits can also include basic necessities, referrals (including to temporary shelters), case management, and access to facilities for urgent needs (such as access to internet and power) and depend on community-level needs. Funds may be available for mortgage assistance.	CSBG post-disaster housing assistance varies by state, territory, and tribe.	Individuals and families must meet state, territory, and tribe's eligibility requirements.	Vouchers, gift cards, or direct payment to vendors.	CSBG State, Territory Grantee Contact Information CSBG Tribal Grantees Find Your CAA	OCS Disaster Flexibilities Hub CSBG IM on Disaster Flexibilities and Waivers Mitigating Heat Stress in Vulnerable Populations FY 2022 Storms and Power Outages Flexibilities FY 2021 CSBG IM on Mortgage Payment Assistance
Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)	SSBG provides funding for 29 social service categories, including housing. Costs of room and board may be provided for a short term as an integral but subordinate part of a social service or as temporary emergency shelter provided as a protective service. ⁹ States and territories can use SSBG in a flexible way to address the needs of individuals, families, and communities during response and recovery.	SSBG post-disaster housing includes rental and mortgage assistance not reimbursed by FEMA, private insurance, or other sources. Housing services are activities or services designed to assist individuals or families in locating, obtaining, or retaining suitable housing, such as tenant counseling, identifying and correcting substandard housing conditions, understanding leases, securing utilities, and making moving arrangements and minor renovations.	Post-disaster housing assistance varies by state or territory.	Eligibility requirements are determined by the state or territory.	Determined by state or territory. Cash payments for costs of subsistence or for the provision of room and board are not allowed.	SSBG Grantee Contact Information	OCS Disaster Flexibilities Hub SSBG IM-2021-01 Flexibilities in the Wake of Hurricane Season

⁷ See 42 U.S.C. 8628

⁸ See 42 U.S.C. 9918(a)(1)

⁹ See 42 U.S.C. 1397d(a)(2)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1. What types of post-disaster housing support are available through these programs?

Funding from these programs can be used for post-disaster housing such as hotels, motels, heating/cooling centers during the day, rental and mortgage assistance, as well as utility reconnection costs. Refer to the chart for specific information on each program.

Q2. How can I find out if these benefits are available in my location?

Contact the STLT point of contact (POC) for each program regarding the availability of post-disaster housing assistance and eligibility requirements. Ask the POC how benefits are accessible at the local level. See the chart for links for contact information for each program.

Q3. Why is this information important for emergency managers?

This information provides emergency managers with post-disaster housing options for disaster survivors, including those who are not eligible for FEMA housing assistance or other programs for disaster survivors. Emergency managers are encouraged to partner with these programs to learn how they can support disaster survivors.

Q4. How can human service organizations and providers use this information?

Human service organizations and providers are encouraged to contact the STLT POCs for these programs regarding the availability of post-disaster housing. STLT program POCs are encouraged to share information with emergency managers and case workers on how these programs can support disaster survivors with post-disaster housing and other benefits.

Q5. As a case manager working directly with a client, what do I need to keep in mind?

Case managers assisting disaster survivors are encouraged to learn the benefit availability, eligibility requirements, and time limits for these programs, which vary by state, territory, and tribe. Disaster survivors may receive assistance through these programs even if they were not enrolled prior to the disaster as long as they meet the grant recipient's eligibility requirements. For example, TANF NRST benefits may be available for those who did not receive TANF cash assistance before the disaster.

Q6. Can these programs support individuals displaced to my state or territory due to a disaster in another state or territory?

These programs may support disaster survivors displaced to another state or territory if the individual or family meets the grant recipient's eligibility requirements.

Q7. What if post-disaster housing is not available through these programs in my state, territory, or tribe?

State, territorial, or tribal grant recipients of TANF, LIHEAP, CSBG, or SSBG may contact the ACF Program Office about updating the program plan to include post-disaster housing.

INQUIRIES

Please direct any inquiries to the respective program office.

/s/

Natalie N. Grant

Director

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/s/

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Director

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/s/

Ann Flagg

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