

2021-2022 New York State Rental Supplement Program Plan

District: Albany County

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RSP Implementation Date: XX/XX/XXXX

Indicate whether the program will be administered using district mechanisms (e.g., direct administration or transfer of funds to county agencies) or by another public agency, contractor or non-profit organization. Administration of the RSP may be delegated in full or in part. Also indicate whether districts will coordinate with the local HUD-funded Continuum of Care, if applicable.

The Albany County Department of Social Services will administer the Rental Supplement Program in its entirety. At this time, we do not anticipate that we will contract with any other public or non-profit agencies to implement the program. We will coordinate with and include our COC to identify trends and data to assist us in a successful implementation of this program.

Indicate the anticipated RSP supplement amount and the number of households expected to be served in the initial 12-month period. RSP supplement amounts are set at 85% of the local Fair Market Rent (FMR) values with a district option to pay up to 100% of FMR using local funds.

RSP Supplement Amount: \$850 Average projected payment (this assumes multiple households will have little income to contribute to the 30% requirement).

Anticipated Number of Households to be Served: 94 households (annually)

Household Size	Allowable Number of Bedrooms	100% FY2022 HUD FMR	85% FY2022 HUD FMR State Reimbursed	Max Supplement Amount	District Funded Amount
1	1	\$991	\$842	\$842	\$0
2	1	\$1,207	\$1,026	\$1,026	\$0
3	2	\$1,492	\$1,268	\$1,268	\$0
4	2	\$1,637	\$1,391	\$1,391	\$0

Albany County's RSP allocation is \$1,125,750 minus 15% Administrative costs (\$168,862) to implement the program leaves \$956,888 for rent supplement. We average potential payment of \$850 per month per household X 12 months = \$10,200 per year per household.
 $\$1,062,500/\$10,200 = 93.8$ households.

Describe the outreach mechanisms that will be used. Receipt of TA is not a requirement for determining eligibility for the RSP, but at least 50% of the supplements shall be allocated for households who are currently in shelter or experiencing homelessness (unless sufficient demand does not exist for such households within a district).

DSS will provide education and outreach on the program and work closely with our contracted shelter providers (two Family Shelters, Domestic Violence shelter provider and five single shelters) to identify families and singles who would benefit from the RSP in order to move out of shelter and into permanent housing. We will also provide education and outreach to other community providers which work with homeless families and singles to identify individuals who are homeless or facing an eviction for not being able to pay rent, who may be potentially eligible for RSP. DSS is an active member of the Coordinated Entry Committee and will engage the committee in seeking referrals for the Rental Supplement Program.

Describe the application and determination process, including the length of time within which applications will be approved or denied. OTDA encourages districts/contractors to make decisions regarding applications within 30 days of the application date.

We propose a program specific application for applicants to complete and sign to apply for RSP funding. In addition to the application, there will be required documentation to be submitted such as lease or rental agreement, proof of earned and unearned income, etc.

Families or individuals who are in our emergency contracted shelters can work with their shelter case managers/staff to complete and file the application. Case managers at the shelters will forward the application to our Temporary Assistance (TA) Client Support Specialist and/or Temporary Assistance Caseworker. Coordinated Entry will be versed in eligibility requirements for RSP and assist in identifying eligible households and completing applications.

Families or individuals who are not in one of our contracted shelters but are homeless and working with other Albany County community providers or on the Coordinated Entry list will be linked directly with our TA Client Support Specialist and TA Caseworker who will then contact the applicant to assist with the completion and filing of an application and required documentation. We expect Coordinated Entry staff and other providers will also assist in completion of the application with their clients.

Once the application and required documentation is submitted, an eligibility review based on the eligibility parameters set by regulation and Albany County DSS will be conducted. A determination will be made on all applications no later than 30 days but as soon as possible after an application is filed.

Describe the forms and/or notices that will be used to facilitate the application and determination process. When households requesting a supplement do not meet the criteria established by the district, the denial/discontinuance letter must support the decision by explaining the criteria and the district's decision that the household does not meet such criteria. When a supplement is approved, an award letter must be provided to both the tenant and landlord and must detail the amount approved to be paid on a monthly basis and the months/term included.

Albany County DSS proposes the following forms (attached):

Rental Supplement Application
Rental Supplement Housing Assistance Award Letter
Rental Supplement Notification of Denial and Applicant Request for
Eligibility Review Conference
Rental Supplement Recertification

Indicate the anticipated target population, including prioritization of certain households (e.g., those with children under the age of six, single individuals, veterans, individuals and families experiencing domestic violence (DV) and non-DV victims of violence). Eligible participants include individuals and/or families, regardless of immigration status, who are experiencing homelessness or facing an imminent loss of housing, including individuals and families with or without children.

The following populations, regardless of immigration status or age of children, will be prioritized for the Rental Supplement Program:

- Homeless families provided emergency shelter by our two contracted family shelters
- Families that are at risk of being homeless - referral from community partners
- Families and/or singles moving out of a DV Shelter into an apartment
- Single homeless individuals in our five contracted shelters
- Singles at risk of homelessness-referral from community providers

Indicate how the following eligibility standards will be met:

- **Households must earn no more than 50% of area median income (AMI) at the time of application (using current monthly income for the household and excluding earned income of a minor child; adoption/foster care payments; one-time loans, gifts, lump sum payments or other non-recurring income; and childcare subsidy payments) based on location and household size, with initial priority given to households who earn no more than 30% of AMI;**
- **A household's financial contribution will be limited to 30% of their households' total earned and/or unearned income; and**
- **Supplements are to be provided until the household's income reaches 30% or more of their monthly rent, at which point the housing will be considered affordable for the individual/family and the supplement will end.**

As part of our eligibility determination process:

- We will verify the applicant(s) household income from all sources by reviewing all documentation submitted. This review will verify that the household income is not over 50% of the Area Median Income. We will prioritize applications for households with income at or below 30% of the Area Median Income.
- Based on applicant's income and the 85% of rent paid by the program, we will calculate the household's payment share, ensuring it is 30% of the household's total income.
- Once the application has been approved, families/individuals and landlords will be notified

in writing what their Rental Supplemental Funding will be and how much of their household income they are responsible to contribute/how much the tenant will pay to landlord. Recipients will also be informed that they have to report any income or household composition changes to DSS in order to continue to receive the supplement. This notification will also remind them that any moves to a new apartment will require a new application to be submitted to be considered for Rental Supplemental funding.

- We will verify income and rental charge at recertification for the supplement.

List any other established eligibility criteria and indicate how each criterion will be determined and documented. Include the following:

Will leases be required of all tenants? Yes, or the client will need to provide another form of documentation (e.g. rental agreement, receipts, etc.) that verifies they are legally residing at the address and are the responsible party.

- **How will the district/contractor ensure that the rental costs are legitimate and the responsibility of the recipient if a lease is not required?** If a Lease is not provided, we will ask for two forms of verification/documentation that proves rental amount and responsibility of payment. We may also consider calling the landlord for verification.
- **Will there be any health and safety standards regarding the housing that must be met prior to paying the supplement at a specific location?** No rental supplements will be approved unless the housing meets the appropriate village/town/city building codes. In the City of Albany, the landlord will also be required to have a valid Certificate of Occupancy. The Client will sign a Release Form so we can obtain a completed inspection report of the affordable housing unit from the landlord. We will also require a lead inspection prior to an individual or family moving into any apartment and payment of any rental supplemental funds.
- **How will the district handle modifications (e.g., moves, rent increases, changes in household composition, etc.)?** Individuals and families will be required to notify DSS within 10 days whenever there is a move, rent increase or any change in household composition, etc. For moves to a new apartment, the individual/family will be required to reapply for the RSP funds so we can re-determine eligibility, ensure the housing is affordable and it meets the health and safety standards according to building codes, certification of occupancy and lead levels and to recalculate payment amounts. For individuals or families who have rent increases or decreases or changes in household composition, Albany County will require the recipient to complete a reassessment form to confirm that they are still eligible for the shelter supplement. This reassessment form will be completed within 10 days of any rent or household composition change or at Recertification which will be no later than 6 months from the approved initial application or renewal date.
- **What standards will be followed in determining whether supplementation will continue following a move?** The RSP will not automatically continue if a recipient moves. A new application along with supporting documentation will be required for any new apartment location. As part of the new application, individuals or families will need to provide documentation of household income and verification of address and rental amount as well as new lease or landlord documentation. Individuals choosing to move for any reason other than health and safety issues outside of their control must move into a housing unit which is affordable. Recipients will have to recertify every 6 months.
- **Will the district/contractor require the recipient household to report changes related to the supplement within a set timeframe as a condition of continued eligibility for the supplement?** Yes, all changes will need to be provided and

verified to DSS within 10 days and, if necessary, rental payment amounts will be recalculated.

- **How will contributions towards rental costs from individuals outside the household be verified and what standards will be applied in determining whether such contributions can be sustained in the future?**

Contributions towards rent from members outside the household will be verified by a statement from the recipient and from the individual making the contribution. The statement must include whether it is a one-time payment or the anticipated frequency of this ongoing contribution. To determine whether such contributions can be sustained, we will require pay stubs or other income award letters to accompany a statement from the rent contributor with the amount being contributed, the relationship, address and phone number of where they can be reached.

- **Indicate the length of time the supplement will be offered to households (e.g., three months, six months, indefinitely, etc.) and whether there is a recertification process for the supplement.**

The supplement will continue for twelve months with the potential to be extended if funding is available and there have been no significant changes where the family/individual would no longer be eligible (move to a new unaffordable housing unit, significant increase in income where their rent is at or below 30% of total income, etc.) We will conduct a recertification every 6 months to verify ongoing eligibility for the rental supplement assistance.

Indicate the payment mechanism (e.g., check, transfer of funds, etc.) and whether the supplement will be paid to the tenant or the landlord.

Payment will be in the form of checks directly to the Landlord.

Indicate how fraudulent and/or cases determined to otherwise be ineligible will be handled, including the procedure for recouping funds, if necessary.

Ineligible applicants will be informed through the Letter of Denial. Fraud staff will investigate potential cases of fraudulent applications.

Describe how the district/contractor will ensure that households do not receive duplicate benefits from other sources that may assist with paying future rent/ongoing rental supplements.

We will work closely with our COC and other community providers (Legal Aid Society of NENY, CARES, etc.) who have responsibility for administering ESG and STEHP funding or other rental assistance funding (ERAP, Section 8, etc.) to verify recipients of those funding sources to ensure we are not duplicating funding or providing any RSP funding that would exceed the total rental amount for any individual or family. As much as possible, we will review HMIS to assess duplication.

Indicate how client records will be maintained (e.g., paper file cabinets, electronic records, or a combination of both) and whether any specific software or system will be used. Notifications regarding eligibility determinations (e.g., approvals, denials and discontinuances) must be maintained in the case record for a minimum of six years following submission of the final expenditure report.

Applicant and recipient records will be maintained in paper file cabinets. If we are able to

utilize an existing system or procure an electronic record system, we will move to electronic files and notify NYS what software or system we will be utilizing. All records (paper or electronic) including applications, notifications of approvals, denials, discontinuances, will be maintained for six years following the submission of our final expenditure reports.

Indicate how the progress of those served in the RSP will be monitored. Reports that describe the progress of RSP activities and those served will be required on at least a quarterly basis. A report template will be provided. Minimally, reports must include the amount of rental supplement payments provided, the number of households served and certain demographic information including receipt of TA and household composition.

We plan to assess the availability of current or new software programs to utilize to track the progress of RSP applicants and recipients to report on the key data elements NYS requires. In the meantime, we will create an excel spreadsheet that will collect the names, addresses, landlord information, approved/denied applications, rental supplements, and other pertinent demographic information (ages, gender, etc.) for tracking and reporting purposes.

To the fullest extent possible, RSP funding should not be used to supplement existing Shelter Supplement Programs. Districts who currently have an approved Shelter Supplement Plan must indicate the following:

- **How the RSP will be different from their current approved Shelter Supplement Plan**
- **The process established to ensure funds are not duplicated**
- **How participating households will be distinguished**

N/A at this time