

## 2021-2022 New York State Rental Supplement Program Plan

**District:** Otsego County

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**RSP Implementation Date:** TBD

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**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 Otsego County DSS will contract with Catholic Charities of Delaware, Otsego, and Schoharie Counties for the administration of the RSP. Catholic Charities, a local non-profit organization that has worked closely with DSS and other local agencies to serve the homeless or at-risk of homelessness population through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, the Emergency Solutions Grant and through the oversight of a Warming Station in Oneonta. Otsego County Department of Social Services will complete and submit all claims with the State of New York through the Automated Claiming System. Catholic Charities will work closely with DSS for coordination of service for RSP clients. Catholic Charities will work with the local HUD-funded Continuum of Care and use the HHMIS system on this project.

**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:** \$125,940

Otsego	Full	50%	30%				
	EFF	1 BR	2 BR	3 BR	4 BR		
2022 FMR	\$723	\$734	\$892	\$1,151	\$1,307		Per HUD
85% FMR	\$614.55	\$623.90	\$758.20	\$978.35	\$1,110.95		

**Anticipated Number of Households to be Served: 20**

**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).**

Catholic Charities of Delaware, Otsego, and Schoharie Counties oversees the warming station in Oneonta. The staff will refer guests who present as homeless to our office to discuss the program. Catholic Charities works closely with the Department of Social Services receiving referrals from DSS and referring individuals to DSS for services. Catholic Charities participates in the meetings of the local homeless collaborative, which includes members of the human service organizations serving the homeless population including those in shelters, the medical community and the faith community. Information will be shared on our social media and website, as well as sent to all local human service providers. Flyers will be sent to all shelters and put up in areas where the homeless are known to congregate, including local free meal sites.

**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.**

The process includes intake, verification and documentation, budgeting and a rent calculation worksheet. A decision regarding eligibility can be made once all verification and documentation has been received from the individual. If the application is not complete within 30 days, the application will be denied. *If a delay in the application process occurs due to a lack of access to documents, proof that replacements have been ordered will serve to allow for an extension of up to another 15 days to complete the application.*

**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.**

Catholic Charities will provide assistance through the Otsego County Department of Social Services' allocation for the Rental Supplement Program by having a case manager conduct an intake with individuals and families who are homeless or are facing an imminent loss of housing. The intake will include collection of demographic information, verification of identification, all income information (earned and unearned) and verification, to include letters from the payer indicating amount, pay

schedule, and length of time payments are to continue. Budget information including income and expenses will be completed with individuals and a signed statement identifying other housing assistance benefits being received. Individuals will be asked about income coming into the household, verification documentation will be required including but not limited to pay stubs, W-2s, bank and other financial statements, proof of child/spousal support. If homeless, documentation of homelessness will need to be completed by the shelter or a self-attestation will be signed. If facing imminent loss of housing, a written statement of eviction from the landlord will be required. As part of the intake, the case manager will make referrals to other programs that the individual or family may be eligible for such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Home Energy Assistance Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance, Health Coverage, Mental Health services, and other appropriate community services for the individual or family. The case manager will collect signed Consent for the Release of Information forms to be able to make referrals on behalf of the household as well as to receive follow-up information on services received and progress made to facilitate further referrals or assistance.

Tenants will be required to send in quarterly verification of income and household composition. Once intake is complete including required documentation, applications will be deemed eligible on a first come first served basis based on meeting one or more of the following priorities:

- Individual or family is currently homeless, including those currently in a shelter or other non-permanent housing
- Individual or family is facing risk of loss of housing as verified with a written notice of eviction *from the landlord*
- Individual or family currently earns no more than 30% AMI
- Individual or family currently earning no more than 50% AMI

Individuals or families that are deemed ineligible will be notified in writing with documentation of the criteria for eligibility and an explanation of why the household does not meet it.

Rental supplements will be set at no more than 85% of the fair market value as set by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development for New York State. Households will be responsible for applying 30% of their income toward the rent. Rental supplements will continue until such time as the rent amount is 30% or less of the of the household income, as long as program requirements continue to be met and funds continue to be available.

Households will be responsible for locating housing that will meet the FMR guidelines of the program, providing a copy of the lease or a letter from the landlord, ensuring contact between the case manager and the landlord including access for the case manager to conduct Housing Habitability Standards Checklist. Catholic Charities will offer resources such as internet/computer access, daily newspaper and referrals to local Community Based Organization to assist with their housing search.

Once an eligible household locates housing, the tenant and the landlord will both receive an award letter that details the total monthly amount of the rent, the amount that the tenant is responsible for and the approved amount to be paid by the program. The letter will outline the term for program approval.

Households will be required to submit verification of household composition and income verification to the case manager every three months for continued rental assistance. Failure to report a change in family composition or change in income may result in a loss of the rental supplement. Failure to supply requested documentation of income and household composition verification within 30 days of the request will result in loss of the rental supplement program to the individual/family. Changes in income and household composition will result in the modification of the household budget, including increased household contribution to the monthly rent or the end of the rental supplement.

When the rental supplement program ends for a household, both the landlord and the household will receive notice that the program will be ending 30 days prior to the end date with rental supplement continuing through that 30 days.

**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.**

Applications will be approved on a first come first served basis when complete based on the following priorities. A weekly case management meeting will be held to discuss case viability and status.

1. Individual or family is currently homeless, including those currently in a shelter or other non-permanent housing
2. Individual or family is facing imminent risk of loss of housing as verified with a written notice of eviction
3. Individual or family currently earns no more than 30% AMI
4. Individual or family currently earning no more than 50% AMI

**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.**

The intake will include collection of demographic information, verification of identification, all income information (earned and unearned) and verification, to include letters from the payer indicating amount, pay schedule, and length of time payments are to continue. Budget information including income and expenses will be completed with individuals and a signed statement identifying other housing assistance benefits being received. Income verification documentation will be required including but not limited to pay stubs, W-2s, bank and other

financial statements for all income and excluded income. All income sources will be entered into the rent calculation worksheet to determine the amount of rent that will be paid by the tenant (30% of income) up to 30% of the monthly rent. On-going rental supplement will require information to be supplied regarding income and household composition on a quarterly basis.

**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?**
- **How will the district/contractor ensure that the rental costs are legitimate and the responsibility of the recipient if a lease is not required?**
- **Will there be any health and safety standards regarding the housing that must be met prior to paying the supplement at a specific location?**
- **How will the district handle modifications (e.g., moves, rent increases, changes in household composition, etc.)?**
- **What standards will be followed in determining whether supplementation will continue following a move?**
- **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?**
- **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?**

Prior to creating an award letter or writing a check for payment, Catholic Charities will require the case manager to complete a Housing Habitability Standards checklist to qualify the housing selected and tenants to have a written lease, rental agreement or landlord letter that states that time period covered by the lease, the amount of the rent, any other charges that could be incurred, requirements to break the lease, any items tenants must know/rules to follow, the full name and contact information of the landlord, the address of the property being rented, the full name of the tenant, the household members included on the lease, and what will happen if the individual/family would like to add household members. Landlords will also need to provide Catholic Charities with a current W-9. Individuals will be asked about income coming into the household, verification documentation will be required including but not limited to pay stubs, W-2s, bank and other financial statements, proof of child/spousal support, on-going rental supplement will require an agreement to send in continued documentation of income monthly. Any change will require updated documentation and verifications which may result in increased rent or program eligibility loss. If a family moves, they will need to have a new lease or landlord letter, the case manager will need to verify that the rent meets FMR and complete the Housing Habitability Checklist for the RSP to continue. Families are only required to report changes on financial circumstances that put the family's income over the eligibility limit between quarterly income verification. Quarterly income verification may be done in person, by mail, email, or fax of pay statements and other forms of income, and any changes to the household composition. Contributions toward rental costs from individuals outside of the household will be verified using banking records or other receipts documenting funds from the individual to the tenant. Contributions will be considered sustainable based on their source: Income from a job considered full- or part- and permanent, from SSI/SSD, from a retirement account, or other sources of income considered permanent.

**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.**

Rental supplements will be offered as long as funds are available with quarterly updates of income verification documents and household composition documentation to verify continued eligibility for the program.

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

Catholic Charities will pay rental supplements by check mailed on a monthly basis to the landlord. Catholic Charities will voucher Otsego County Department of Social Services to complete and submit all claims with the State of New York through the Automated Claiming System.

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

If Catholic Charities learns of potential fraudulent rental supplement payments, payments will cease immediately *while an investigation is conducted, and a determination is made*. We will work with the Otsego County Department of Social Services and the Corporate Compliance and legal departments for Catholic Charities of Delaware, Otsego, and Schoharie Counties to appropriately recoup funds which would include documentation of the fraud or ineligibility, a meeting with the tenant and legal department, a certified notification of intent to recoup, and possibly filing a petition with the court to recoup the funds. If Catholic Charities learns that incorrect or untrue information has been purposefully submitted as part of an application for the Rental Supplement Program, the application will be denied. The client, potential landlord, and the Otsego County Department of Social Services will be notified.

**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. 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.**

The case manager will collect signed Consent for the Release of Information forms to be able to make referrals on behalf of the household as well as to receive follow-up information on services received and progress made to facilitate further referrals or assistance. Consents for the Release of Information will be signed for Catholic Charities and the Department of Social Services, and any other source of housing assistance to verify the assistance being received does not overlap or duplicate the rental supplement. The Case Manager will participate in a weekly case management meeting for county housing assistance clients.

Catholic Charities will keep a paper file, collecting information and verifications, a Housing Habitability Standards checklist, letters to the household and landlords, a rent calculation worksheet, etc. We will record and track the information in the local COC's HMIS. Case files will be kept for the current year plus six years prior. Paper files are kept in a locked cabinet for confidentiality.

**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.**

Catholic Charities will use the information provided during the intake and quarterly re-submission of income and household composition information, information from DSS and other agencies to inform the reports using the required template and including required information. Reports will be submitted by the due date to the contact person identified by the Otsego County Department of Social Services.

**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**

Current shelter supplements are authorized through the Temporary Assistance case. The target population for the districts program is limited to specific types of cases; single individuals, and married childless couples who are in temporary housing utilizing TA funds, and as follows:

- ☐ Have an SSI/RSDI application pending, or
- ☐ are required as a condition of TA eligibility to apply for SSI/RSDI, or
- ☐ have been in temporary housing for more than 60 days.

RSP does not have the above requirements to apply.

Weekly Case management meetings between Catholic Charities and the Housing Unit at DSS will monitor those requesting RSP funds to ensure they will not be used to supplement existing Shelter Supplement Programs and to prevent any duplication. Applicants for RSP will not be in receipt of the districts supplement program.

Ongoing communication between Catholic Charities and the Housing Unit at DSS will monitor those requesting RSP funds to ensure they will not be used to supplement existing Shelter Supplement Programs and to prevent any duplication.