

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

**District:** Rensselaer County

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**RSP Implementation Date:** 10/1/2022

**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.**

Rensselaer County will utilize St. Paul's Center to administer this program. Joseph's House and Unity House's Domestic Violence Shelter will assist with the completion of application and then forward the application and proof of income to St. Paul's program administrator. The program administrator will handle the screening process, intake, obtain W9's from landlords, handle data entry for quarterly reporting, issue monthly payments, and conduct recertification.

**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:** \$497,493.00

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

50 households-

The plan is to limit the supplement to 85% of FMR. The attached table details that along with occupancy guidelines.

**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).**

This can be promoted via the Alliance for Better Health's referral network, UniteUs. CoC members will be notified via email and meeting announcements for the Rensselaer Homeless Services Collaborative. Rensselaer County Mental Health will announce the program's availability during various committee meetings. Other organizations notified of this program's availability include Food Pantries of the Capital Region, Joseph's House, Unity House, CEO and CEO's Head Start program locations.

**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.**

St. Paul's program administrator will determine eligibility and will send out notification letters for approval or denial to clients. Turn around time will be focused to determine eligibility as soon as possible and no longer than 30 days.

**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.**

The current rapid rehousing application has been edited to include data to determine eligibility (income and sources, apartment details including address, rent, etc. Paystubs or letters from employers to verify income and determine income eligibility. Documentation of rent will be provided (via lease or landlord attestation). An award letter to the tenant and landlord OR a denial letter will be issued within 30 days of application.

**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 program administrator will start with the Coordinated Entry wait list. Continue to have CE refer applicants who do not qualify or will never score high enough for permanent supportive housing. Priority will be given to those currently experiencing homelessness. Unity House's Domestic Violence Shelter cannot participate in the CoC Coordinated Entry system, however, will provide referrals to St. Paul's program administrator.

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.**

Income will be verified by pay stubs, income tax statements, benefit statements or other documentation relative to earned or unearned sources. That documentation will be used to determine/confirm the tenants contribution toward rent. The program administrator will conduct yearly recertification to determine the recipient continues to meet the above criteria. Supplements are to be provided until the household's income increases to a level where their monthly rent is at or below 30% of their total income, at which point the housing will be considered affordable for the individual/ family and the supplement will end.

**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
- How will the district/contractor ensure that the rental costs are legitimate and the responsibility of the recipient if a lease is not required? Attestation from the landlord
- Will there be any health and safety standards regarding the housing that must be met prior to paying the supplement at a specific location? #3
- How will the district handle modifications (e.g., moves, rent increases, changes in household composition, etc.)? #4
- What standards will be followed in determining whether supplementation will continue following a move? #5
- 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? #6
- 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?

3. If code isn't inspecting, the program administrator will use the HUD's habitability inspection form for certified staff to complete.

4. Tenants and/or landlord must notify us of rent increases 5% or more within 30, 60 or 90 days, depending on the length of tenancy. Tenants must notify us within 30 days of moves and intention to continue use of the supplement at their new residence. During that time, the program administrator will inspect the unit and obtain a W9 from the landlord. Tenants must notify us within 30 days of an household changes.

5. The new unit must meet FMR requirement. Tenant's income should be verified again. Apartment must pass the HUD habitability inspection.

6. The recipient will be required to notify the program administrator of changes of income within 15 days of the change to examine continued eligibility; failure to do so may result in losing this grant. This will be stressed during intake and annual recerts. Twice during the first year, tenants will receive a reminder letter of program requirements.

7. All income, regardless of source, will be verified. TA will establish standards to determine sustainability of that income.

**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 could be available for 1) as long as funds are available and if that is met, 2) for as long as the household meets the income requirements and meet program requirements (notification of changes; attend annual recerts, and 3) if #1 and 2 are met, until the income reaches a level where the rent is 30% or less of the household's total income.

On calendar quarters, all heads of households will receive a survey where they may identify any change in income and household make up. That survey will include an "avoid fraud" statement. In-person annual certifications will be required to verify income and household make up.

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

Checks will be sent monthly directly to the landlord. The landlord submits a W9 and will receive 1099s each January.

The Center plans to use ETFs as the payment mechanism in the future as we move toward building efficiencies in our finance function.

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

Recipients will be responsible to notify the program administrator of any financial changes. If there is any suspicion of fraud, a referral is to be made to the Social Services Fraud Unit for investigation. The Fraud Unit will investigate and make a determination whether or not fraud has occurred, and the amount of fraud. If so determined, a repayment agreement will be attempted. If the offending party refuses a repayment agreement, other legal action (referral to the district attorney) will be considered.

**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.**

At the time of application, the possibility of receiving rental assistance from other sources can be confirmed with homeless housing providers, DSS, and housing authorities. The annual recertification process can include completed verification letters: Mr. John Doe is not in receipt of rental assistance from xx agency.

This will be a collaborative effort from community agencies and DSS to ensure recipients are not receiving duplicate funding. The program administrator will start with the Coordinated Entry wait list. Continue to have CE refer applicants who do not qualify or will never score high enough for permanent supportive housing.

**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.**

Client records would be a combination of paper file cabinets and electronic records. St. Paul's Center will use QuickBooks to track payments. The Center confirmed with CARES that HMIS may be used to track tenant data and provide report generation.

**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.**

St Paul's Center will use HMIS to track tenant data and QuickBooks for financial reporting.

**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**

There is no approved shelter supplement plan.