

## 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.

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

- a. 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;

#### AND

Your household must belong to **Group A** or **Group B** below.

#### Group A

Your household will belong to **Group A** if:

1. It meets **one** of the following requirements:
  - a. Be a family living in DHS shelter for the last 90 days with a gap no larger than 10 days; **OR**
  - b. Be a single Adult living in DHS shelter for 90 of the last 365 days;
  - c. Reside in an HRA shelter;
  - d. Reside in a DHS shelter and be eligible for HRA shelter;

#### AND

2. It **also** meets **one** of the following additional requirements:
  - a. The household includes someone under 18 and the combined household has been working (subsidized or unsubsidized) 30 hours per week for the last 30 days;

(Turn page)

2. It **also** meets **one** of the following additional requirements (*continued*):
  - b. The household is an adult only household working (subsidized or unsubsidized) any number of hours per week for the last 30 days;
  - c. Someone 18 or over is disabled (receives federal disability benefits or is in receipt of ongoing CA and is on the WeCARE SSI track);
  - d. Someone in the household is 60 years of age or older;
  - e. Someone 18 or over is exempt from public assistance work requirements because they are needed at home to care for a disabled family member;

### **Group B**

Your household will belong to **Group B** if it resides in DHS or HRA shelter and meets one of the following requirements:

- a. The household includes someone who served in the U.S. Armed Forces;
- b. The household is living in a DHS shelter that is about to close;
- c. 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 have any questions about CityFHEPS and your eligibility, you should talk to your housing specialist or case manager.

### **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 for 90 days 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. 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 have any questions about CityFHEPS and your eligibility, you should talk to your housing specialist or case manager.

**(Turn page)**

### **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 Job 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.

**(Turn page)**

### **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;
- 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, a single room in an apartment, or an SRO unit. Any housing must be in the five (5) boroughs of New York City.

SRO units are only available for households with one adult. The maximum rent that CityFHEPS will allow is \$1,424 per month.

A single room is available to a household of no more than two adults. The maximum rent that CityFHEPS will allow is \$800 per month.

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

The payment standards below 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).

The payment standard 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 allow 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.

<b>Bedroom Size</b>	<b>Family Size</b>	<b>Payment Standard</b>
SRO/Studio	1	\$1,424 (SRO) \$1,900 (Studio)
1	1 or 2	\$1,945
2	3 or 4	\$2,217
3	5 or 6	\$2,805
4	7 or 8	\$3,006
5	9 or 10	\$3,457
6	11 or 12	\$3,908
7	13 or 14	\$4,359

**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.

**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.

**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.

**(Turn page)**

**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://www1.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://www1.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. Please call the DSS Source of Income Discrimination Unit at 929-221-6576 if a landlord is refusing to rent to you because you receive CityFHEPS.

**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, 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.

### **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.
- 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 DSS Source of Income Discrimination Unit at (929)-221-6576.
- 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 fee.
- Your landlord cannot force you to move to a different unit.
- Call the HRA Fraud Hotline at 718-722-8001 immediately if the unit you viewed at your walkthrough is not the same unit you are offered at 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.