

SPECIAL ONE-TIME ASSISTANCE (SOTA) PROGRAM FAQs

1. What is the Special One-Time Assistance (“SOTA”) program?

The SOTA program provides one year’s full rent up front for eligible DHS clients to move within New York City, to other New York State counties, or to another state, Puerto Rico, or Washington, D.C. SOTA can be accessed by working individuals and families and those who receive SSI, SSD, etc. as long as there is the future ability to make rent payments based on the household’s rent not exceeding 50% of the household’s income.

2. Who is eligible?

Eligibility criteria include the following:

- Families with children: The household must have been in shelter for at least 90 days.
- Single adults and adult families: The household must have been in shelter for 90 days out of the last 365 days.
- The household must be working and/or have enough income to make future rent payments based on their rent not exceeding 50% of household income. Income includes employment or SSI, SSD, etc.

If the household is moving within New York City (only), it must not be eligible for any federal, State or City rental subsidy.

3. How is the ability to pay rent determined?

In order to use SOTA, clients will be required to provide proof of income, and the rent must not be more than 50% of household income.

4. How does a household in shelter apply for SOTA?

Case managers and housing specialists identify clients who may be eligible for SOTA. In addition, clients may reach out to their case manager or housing specialist if they believe they may be eligible. Housing specialists assist clients with their housing search and clients may also identify units on their own.

5. Can SOTA be used for room rentals?

No. SOTA cannot be used for room rentals.

6. Is there an apartment review required when using SOTA?

DHS or provider staff conduct walkthroughs if the unit is within New York City, in the New York State counties of Nassau, Rockland, Suffolk, and Westchester, or in the New Jersey counties of Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Passaic, and Union.

7. What if the apartment fails the review?

If the apartment fails the review and corrections are made in a timely manner, the SOTA funds can be received.

8. What aftercare resources are available to clients moving out with SOTA?

When an individual or family moves within the five boroughs, they are referred to the Homebase office in their community.

9. What happens if a client leaves the apartment during the lease?

Per the terms of the SOTA landlord agreement, the landlord will be obligated to notify HRA within 30 days and return any funds in excess of the client's residency. If funds are not returned, the City will pursue legal means of recoupment.

10. If a landlord in New York City tries to evict the tenant during the first year, how can the tenant get help?

Tenants can be referred by HRA to a lawyer who can represent them in housing court. HRA will work with the lawyer to provide information on the City's rent payments to the court. As per the terms of the landlord agreement, if an eviction occurs, the landlord will be obligated to return any funds in excess of the client's residency. If funds are not returned, the City will pursue legal means of recoupment.

11. What if a DSS client returns to New York City shelter within the 12-month time frame?

DHS and HRA will work to divert the client back to the apartment. If the unit is viable (e.g., no health/safety issues), the client will be ineligible for shelter due to the existence of other housing.

12. What if an individual or family in NYC is unable to pay their portion after the 12-month time frame?

Only individuals and families who are able to afford their rent going forward based on the fact that their rent will not exceed 50% of their income will be able to move out using SOTA. If the tenant is in NYC and there is a loss of income or an issue with the housing, the tenant can go to the local Homebase program or HRA Job Center for assistance.

13. Can a client receive SOTA more than once?

No. DHS clients are only eligible for this rental assistance one time.