



Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative
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MDHI Housing Stability Flexible Fund 2021 - Policies and Procedures

The Housing Stability Flexible Fund (Flex Fund) is made possible by the strong and consistent support from the Metro Mayors Caucus, The Denver Foundation, and other private donors. Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) works with organizations to provide households who are experiencing a housing crisis in the seven-county Metro Denver region with *move-in, prevention, or landlord mitigation assistance*. Flex Fund is designed to remove financial barriers that prevent households from obtaining or remaining in permanent housing. This document outlines MDHI's Flex Fund policies and procedures. More information on the Flex Fund program can be found at www.mdhi.org/Flex_Fund.

I. Accessing Flex Fund Assistance

- Before submitting a request to Flex Fund, the submitter/provider should attempt to obtain assistance from all other resources in the community.
- Flex Fund is used when households would continue to experience homelessness or become literally homeless *but for* this one-time financial assistance.
- To submit to Flex Fund on behalf of eligible households, organizations or providers must be partners with OneHome, our community's Coordinated Entry System, or a member of the Metro Denver Continuum of Care (CoC). For more information on CoC membership and how to apply please visit, <https://www.mdhi.org/coc>.
- The link to the Flex Fund request (Microsoft Form) is posted on our website: www.mdhi.org/Flex_Fund. The questions in the survey may change over time, therefore, community providers should always go to www.mdhi.org/Flex_Fund or reach out to MDHI at flexfund@mdhi.org to obtain the most recent request form.
- Funding fluctuates, and even when all eligibility criteria are met, requests may not be approved. For inquiries and questions related to accessing and submitting Flex Fund requests, e-mail flexfund@mdhi.org.

II. Eligible Participants

- Households are eligible to receive Flex Fund assistance one time per calendar year.
- Individuals and families experiencing a housing crisis in the seven-county Metro Denver region and who are working with a partnering organization are eligible for Flex Fund financial assistance. Households must be literally homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless.
 - *Literal homelessness is defined as an individual or family who is residing in an emergency shelter, transitional housing, or place not meant for human habitation such as a bus stop, camping, or vehicle.*

- If a household is literally homeless and moving into housing, or they are moving into different/new housing, they must have a lease that is signed or ready to be signed. Households must be fully approved for housing and the unit should be ready for move-in (passed inspection) before submitting to Flex Fund.
 - See **Section VII.** for documentation guidelines on leases and letters of approval from landlord/property owners.
- If a household is at-risk of homelessness, they must have written documentation from their current landlord/property owner stating that they need to vacate due to the non-payment of rent or have documentation of the mitigation costs/fees.
 - See **Section VII.** for documentation guidelines.
- Eligible households must be able to maintain housing after receiving one-time financial assistance from the Flex Fund program.

III. Eligible Costs

- The Flex Fund program can be used for one-time move-in costs, prevention and rental assistance, and landlord mitigation costs.
- *Flex Fund can assist with up to \$3,000 per household, but only if that amount is available and needed. Providers are only able to request assistance for one type of eligible cost per submission.*
 - See **Section IV.** for total assistance amounts specific to agency-owned housing and other homeless assistance programs.
- The following are the current eligible Flex Fund costs:

Landlord Mitigation Assistance:

- Reimbursement to landlord/property owners for damages, repairs, or vacancy payments

Move-in Assistance:

- Security Deposit
- First month's rent
- One-time move-in costs (hiring a moving company)
- Pet Deposits or one-time pet fees
- Relocation to another community when there is a confirmed housing opportunity

Prevention Assistance:

- Rental Arrears – current unit
- Rental Arrears – past unit:
 - *Rental arrears in collections will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will only be approved when a household's application for affordable housing, public housing, a housing choice voucher, or a tax-credit unit are being denied.*
 - *Arrears owed must be their only reason for denial.*
- Utility Assistance:
 - *Deposits and arrears assistance is available when impacting a household's ability to establish a new service.*
- Hotel and Motel Assistance – forward paying, no back pay
 - *Will not pay more than 30 days max, but no more than \$3,000 total.*

- *Only able to reimburse agencies for hotel and motel assistance payments.*
 - *Providers must receive prior approval before requesting reimbursements.*
- *Assistance is dependent on the household's situation, and the Flex Fund programs available funding.*
- *Assistance for housing is not available if hotel/motel assistance is being provided.*

Other Financial Barriers to Permanent Housing

- If the household needs Flex Fund financial assistance for something that is not listed as an eligible cost, it must be approved by MDHI before submitting a request form. Please e-mail flexfund@mdhi.org for preapproval.

IV. Assisting Households in Agency-owned Housing and other Homeless Assistance Programs

- If households are residing in agency-owned housing or are current participants of a homeless assistance program (CoC, ESG, etc.), providers must follow these steps before accessing Flex Fund for assistance:
 - If the household is residing in agency-owned housing, assess if a payment plan is an option for the household.
 - If the household is a current participant of a CoC/ESG or another type of Homeless Assistance Program, then MDHI or the person submitting the request should verify that the financial request cannot be covered by the program.
 - When submitting backup documentation to Flex Fund, explain the household's stabilization plan to illustrate the household is connected to resources and that housing stability will be maintained if Flex Fund can provide one-time assistance.
 - If the Flex Fund can assist, there is a specific limit of 50% of the total arrears owed, but no more than \$1,000 total.

V. Requesting Assistance

- MDHI will not accept or approve a request submitted by a program participant/client. The household seeking assistance must be working with a partner organization to submit and process the request.
- Providers are prohibited from submitting a request for the Flex Fund on behalf of a family member, friend, or colleague.
- The same provider cannot submit more than one request at a time and can only have one active Flex Fund request open at a time.
- Providers can submit a request form by clicking on the “**Click Here to Access Online Application**” link found at www.mdhi.org/Flex_Fund.
- Make sure all the information on the form is completed and filled out correctly. If answers to questions are missing, MDHI will reach out to the person who applied for additional or clarifying information.
- After submitting a request to Flex Fund, providers are encouraged to follow up with an e-mail to flexfund@mdhi.org containing required backup documentation for the Flex Fund request to be approved or denied. See **Section VII.** for guidelines on required documents for different eligible costs.

- *If backup documentation is not collected and sent within 10 business days of submitting a request to the Flex Fund, the form will have to be re-submitted, and MDHI can no longer guarantee assistance.*

VI. Process of Approval and Communication

- MDHI Flex Fund will respond to the person submitting the request for assistance and all e-mails within 1-3 business days.
- Providers submitting requests are also responsible for the communication follow-up. The provider who submits the request should be the only person communicating with MDHI about the application for assistance.
 - *If the Flex Fund does not receive correspondence from providers regarding the most recent communication within 10 business days, the request form will have to be re-submitted, and MDHI can no longer guarantee assistance.*
- If the request is approved, MDHI Flex Fund will send an e-mail to the person who submitted the request, indicating the required documentation to collect, if not already provided, and send it back before MDHI can process a payment.
 - *If the person submitting the request does not get a response within 3 business days or it is an urgent request, meaning the payment is due within 1-2 business days, e-mail flexfund@mdhi.org right away upon submitting the form.*
- MDHI attempts to ensure that the Flex Fund is available to all our CoC partners across the seven-county metro Denver Region by tracking the number of requests agencies submit to the Flex Fund per month that are approved and processed.
- Once an agency reaches seven (7) approved and processed requests in one month, the Flex Fund will notify the next submitter from that agency that their max number of processed requests for the month has been reached and other resources should be accessed.
 - *Flex Fund encourages providers to coordinate within agencies to ensure the most appropriate households receive assistance first.*
 - *If funds are available, we may be able to consider additional requests but there are no guarantees.*

VII. Backup Documentation:

- MDHI relies on our community providers to collect and send all backup documentation for assistance. MDHI does not have the capacity to collect the required paperwork, communicate with the vendor (landlord, moving company, utility company, etc.), and/or communicate with people seeking assistance.
 - *Remember, if backup documentation is not collected and sent within 10 business days of submitting a request to the Flex Fund, the form will have to be re-submitted, and MDHI can no longer guarantee assistance.*
- All vendors (property owners, moving companies) must complete a W-9 and provide documentation verifying the amounts owed by the household seeking assistance that is dated within the last 30 days.
- Once backup documentation is collected, e-mail documents to flexfund@mdhi.org. The following are potential examples of backup documentation to collect and submit with a Flex Fund request:

-Landlord Mitigation Documentation:

- **Reimbursement to landlords for damages, repairs, or vacancy payments:**
 - Copy of signed residential lease (if applicable)
 - Invoice including an itemized list of damages and the cost of repairs
 - Move-out Checklist (if applicable)
 - Copy of landlord/property managers W-9.
- **Vacancy Payments:**
 - Promissory note from the landlord/property manager stating that they will continue to rent to participants if a vacancy payment is provided (must be submitted by landlord/property owner)
 - Copy of landlord/property managers W-9

-Move-in Assistance Documentation:

- **Security Deposits:**
 - Copy of signed residential lease showing the security deposit amount; -or-,
 - Copy of blank/unsigned lease and a letter from landlord/property owner stating the household is approved for move-in and includes:
 - Prospective residential address
 - Amount of deposit
 - Tenant's name
 - Copy of landlord/property owner's W-9
- **First month's rent:**
 - Copy of signed residential lease; -or-
 - Copy of blank/unsigned lease and a letter from landlord/property owner stating the household is approved for move-in and includes:
 - Prospective residential address
 - Amount of first month's rent
 - Tenant's name
 - Copy of landlord/property owner's W-9
- **One-time move-in costs (hiring a moving company):**
 - Quote from a moving company or truck rental to be approved by MDHI, then followed by an invoice; -and-
 - Other invoices related to the move-in costs
 - Copy of the moving company or truck rental company's W-9
- **Pet Deposits or one-time pet fees:**
 - Copy of signed residential lease including the pet fee amount; -or-
 - Copy of blank/unsigned lease and a letter from landlord/property owner stating the household is approved for move-in and includes:
 - Prospective residential address
 - Amount of pet deposit
 - Tenant's name
 - Copy of landlord/property owner's W-9

- **Relocation to another community when there is a confirmed housing opportunity:**
 - A letter from the provider describing the participants' permanent housing option available
 - Quote for travel to be approved by MDH, followed by an invoice for travel costs
 - Copy of the third-party vendors W-9

-Prevention Assistance Documentation:

- **Rental Arrears – current unit:**
 - Copy of signed residential lease
 - An eviction notice/demand for compliance; -or-
 - Recently written notice from the landlord/property owner stating:
 - Amount of rent owed
 - The household is at-risk of losing their housing
 - Copy of landlord/property owner's W-9
- **Rental Arrears – past unit:**
 - **If the arrears are with the landlord:**
 - Copy of signed residential lease (if applicable)
 - Written notice of rental arrears from the landlord/property owner that includes the participant's name
 - Copy of landlord/property owners W-9
 - **If the arrears are with a collection agency:**
 - Denial notice from a PHA or HCV because of rental arrears owed to previous property owners only
 - Account balance from a collection agency
 - Copy of the collection agency's W-9
- **Utility Assistance – Arrears and Deposits:**
 - Utility bill in the participant's name that shows the amount of the utility deposit *or* total arrears
 - Copy of the utility company's W-9
- **Hotel and Motel Assistance for up to 30 days max (no more than \$3000):**
 - Invoice from hotel/motel, including participant name and amount owed
 - E-mail or letter from provider describing household's situation and progress towards housing stability
 - Receipt from hotel/motel
 - Copy of the hotel/motels W-9

I. Payments and Reimbursements

- Payments will be made on behalf of the participant and issued to third-party vendors such as a utility company, landlord/property owner, moving company, etc. MDHI cannot directly reimburse a participant.

- Unless otherwise determined by the referral source and MDHI, payments will be mailed to the vendor's address indicated on the W-9.
- MDHI can reimburse a referring agency if the vendor is not willing to wait for the check to be processed.
 - *If an agency is seeking reimbursement, they must provide MDHI with a current copy of their agency's W-9 and proof of the payment transaction (copies of checks, check requests, credit card statement, etc.) within five (5) business days.*
- Agencies that do not get prior approval from MDHI will not be reimbursed. All service providers must fill out a request form and receive approval before issuing a payment and expecting reimbursement.

II. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS):

- Agencies who have access to Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) and submit a Flex Fund request are required to create or update the head of the household and all its members' client profiles in HMIS. Agencies should adhere to the policies and procedures described in [Colorado HMIS Statewide Policies and Procedures](#).
- MDHI staff will enter a Flex Fund service indicating the amount and type of assistance that the household has received along with other household information from the Flex Fund application:
 - Number of people in the household
 - Household type
 - Current housing status
 - Referring agency name
 - City and county where the client resided before becoming homeless or
 - City and county where they resided when they became at-risk of losing housing.
- If agencies do *not* have access or use HMIS, the person submitting the Flex Fund application is required to follow the steps below before the household's information can be shared in HMIS:
 - Obtain consent from the household seeking assistance to have their information shared in HMIS. Consent can be either verbal or written.
 - Written consent is preferred. Indicate on the application the type of consent that was obtained from the household seeking assistance.
 - The Release of Information (ROI) is linked in the application, and if written consent is possible, the ROI should be uploaded into HMIS.
 - If verbal consent is obtained, the ROI should be read aloud to the household seeking assistance.
- If a household refuses to have their information shared in HMIS, MDHI will enter the information to track the service and mark the household as "Private" in the system.