

**Regional Homeless Assistance Recovery Program (HARP) Conference Calls
Questions and Answers from February 2008 Calls**

Q. What is the HARP Program?

A. The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) is a Public Housing Authority (PHA) that administers the Section 8 Voucher Program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD allows PHA's to preference vouchers to populations as needed. MSHDA vouchers preference the homeless, and MSHDA's Section 8 vouchers awarded to the homeless are referred to in MSHDA's PHA Plan as Homeless Assistance Recovery Program (HARP) vouchers.

Q. Is the HARP available statewide?

A. Every county in Michigan has two waiting lists; one list is for those that are homeless and meet the income requirements, and the other list is for those that meet the income requirements and are not homeless.

Q. Who verifies homelessness?

A. The Continuum of Care Body chooses a "Lead Agency" for the county. The Lead Agency completes MSHDA/HP-531, Certification of Eligibility and Residency. The Lead Agency sends the MSHDA/HP-531, along with the HARP application, to the individual that maintains the HARP waiting list for the county.

Q. Should the Lead Agency forward the Certification of Eligibility and HARP applications daily, weekly, or monthly?

A. It is recommended that these forms be sent to the individual that keeps the waiting list upon receipt.

Q. For the HARP, who is considered eligible, i.e., homeless?

A. The Certification of Eligibility and Residency for Housing Choice Voucher (HCV), Homeless Assistance Recovery Program (HARP) form MSHDA/HP-531 outlines the eligibility criteria. The lead agency must determine if the applicant household is homeless. The term "homeless" does **not** include:

- Any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained pursuant to an Act of the Congress or a State law.
- Households that are in the process of being evicted.

Q. Are individuals/families that are doubled-up (couch-surfing) eligible for a HARP voucher?

A. In some rural areas of Michigan there are no shelters; therefore, MSHDA does allow Continuum of Care Bodies to expand the eligibility to include individuals/families living in doubled-up situations to be considered homeless. So-called "couch surfers", including individuals or families who have moved frequently and are now either doubled up or living in a hotel paid for by a service provider are eligible.

Q. Who can assist the Lead Agency/Service Provider determine if an individual/family meets the homeless definition:

A. Supportive Housing's Homeless Assistance Specialists will provide guidance if requested.

- Q. If a homeless individual/family is not staying at a shelter, how can I verify homelessness?
- A. If doubled-up, two verifications forms are needed: 1) A signed statement from the property owner where the individual/family is staying stating how long they have been residing there and why it is necessary for them to move is required, and 2) a signed statement from a service provider stating where the individual/family resides, agreement that they are doubled-up, and the type of service(s) provided.
- Q. If an individual/family is living in permanent supportive housing, are they considered homeless?
- A. Those receiving the following types of rental assistance are considered homeless:
- Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)
 - Shelter Plus Care (S+C)
 - Permanent Supportive Housing (SHP)
 - Transitional Supportive Housing (TSHLAP)
 - Transitional Supportive Housing (TIPLAP)
 - Transitional Supportive Housing (Rapid Re-Housing)
- Attached is a grid that describes these rental assistance programs.
- Q. Do tenants receiving MSHDA TBRA automatically go to the top of the HARP waiting list?
- A. Yes, with required verification, MSHDA TBRA recipients are given a special preference within HARP and are automatically placed at the top of the HARP waiting list.
- Q. Do college students qualify for HARP?
- A. Generally the answer is **NO**. Following are HUD rules on students: Independent students attending an institution of higher learning and must prove independent status from parents for one year to qualify. **AND** be 24 or older, a veteran, married, have dependent children, and income eligible.
- For students that are not 24, not a veteran, are unmarried, have no dependents and are seeking assistance, they must meet both parts of the income eligibility test: student must be eligible and parents must be eligible. If the parents aren't eligible, then the student is not eligible.
- Q. Do homeless with a criminal past qualify for HARP?
- A. The Lead Agency should verify their homelessness and send the HARP application to the HCV Housing Agent. The Agent will run a criminal history background check and determine eligibility based on MSHDA's guidelines.
- Q. If an individual being released from a hospital, nursing home, or mental health institution will be released into homelessness, does he/she qualify for HARP?
- A. If he/she is going to be released into homelessness and meet the HARP income qualifications, "yes", they qualify for HARP regardless of whether they were homeless prior to being admitted to the institution.
- Q. If a homeless individual/family has zero income, how can they pay the minimum Total Tenant Payment (TTP) of \$50.00 which is required by the voucher program?
- A. An exception from the minimum TTP may be granted under certain financial circumstances. The MSHDA Housing Agent will brief the homeless individual when

issuing a HARP voucher, and if the individual has zero income, the minimum TTP of \$50.00 may be waived.

Q. What are the acceptable forms of proof of birth?

A. Acceptable proof of birth must: a) include the individual's name; and b) identify the individual's date of birth. Acceptable proof of birth verification includes:

- Birth Certificate;
- Cradle Roll;
- Hospital Record;
- Affidavit of Parentage;
- Baptism Record;
- Passport;
- Naturalization Certificate;
- Letter from local government (of birth location) identifying why a certificate is not available;
- Third-Party Verification of birth (i.e. letter from Social Security Administration (SSA));
- Green Card;
- United States passport;
- Resident alien card;
- Registration card;
- Social Security card (if it contains the individual's name and identifies the date of birth).

Q. What are acceptable forms of proof of social security number?

A. If a family member is unable to provide a copy of a Social Security Card, the following verification may be accepted as proof of SSN if the document contains the tenant's name and specifically identifies the nine-digit SSN (i.e. SSN: 999-99-9999):

- Medical insurance card (including Medicare and Medicaid);
- Letter from SSA;
- Driver's license;
- Identification card issued by a federal, state, or local agency;
- Identification card issued by an employer or trade union;
- Earnings statements on payroll stubs;
- Bank statements;
- IRS Form 1099;
- Benefit award letters from government agencies;
- Retirement benefit letter;
- Life insurance policies;
- Court records (real estate, tax notices, marriage and divorce, judgment, or bankruptcy records).

For Individuals who applied for legalization under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) the letter issued by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) is acceptable verification.