

Village of Wilmette

Emergency Assistance Program

Purpose and Guidelines

I. Purpose and Nature of Program

The Wilmette Village Board has approved the creation of an Emergency Assistance Program to offer monetary assistance to Wilmette residents experiencing sudden financial hardships. A hardship is defined as a housing emergency which must be resolved immediately and for which the household has no financial means.

While there are several programs available to residents through the Village, New Trier Township, and Cook County, many have income limits and other qualifications for participation. The Housing Commission has found that there is a gap in services where residents in need are unable to qualify for existing assistance programs.

The funding for this program is derived solely from the annual Village budget and is administered by the Housing Commission at the discretion of the Village Board. There is no guarantee that funding will be available from year to year

II. Eligibility and Extent of Assistance

The Emergency Assistance Program is intended to furnish one-time assistance to Wilmette residents who experience sudden financial hardships related to housing due to specific events such as loss of a job, spousal abuse, domestic disputes, accidents, disasters, and similar situations that result in emergency and unforeseen need. Assistance shall not be granted, even though one of the above events has occurred and the applicant's income meets the guidelines, unless, in the sole judgment of the reviewing Commission members, the need for assistance is of a true emergency nature.

The Program is designed to be able to assist those residents who might not otherwise qualify for other available programs due to income or other limitations. Accordingly, the income guidelines for this program are 125% of the Low Income guidelines issued by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and approved by Congress. The guidelines are updated annually and available in the Community Development Office.

Applicants must be residents of the Village for a least one year preceding the application, unless the reviewing Commission members (see Section III, below) in their discretion approve a shorter period of residence or at a higher level of income on an individual case basis.

Assistance, usually not to exceed \$500.00, will be made available only for the following housing-related expenses:

- * utility payments
- * Emergency housing payments in cases of abuse, disability or alimony default
- * moving expenses
- * hotel payments (in case of, e.g., fire, eviction, loss of job, spousal abuse)
- * emergency home repairs (to extent not covered by the Community Development Block Grant Program)

Other types of payment may be authorized at the discretion of the Housing Commission.

III. Requests for Assistance

Requests for assistance will be made to the Housing Commission through the Community Development Department. Other Village Departments, including the Police and Health Departments, as well as other outside agencies, may refer cases to the Housing Commission for assistance. Residents who participate in the Housing Assistance Program, Community Development Block Grant Program, and residents of the Village Green Atrium, Shore Line Place, Gates Manor, and residents receiving Section 8 housing subsidies may also apply for emergency assistance.

The Housing Commission will designate the chair and one other member to review and approve applications for assistance. Applicants for assistance will not be required to wait until the Commission's regular monthly meeting to find out if assistance will be granted. Instead, applications will be acted upon by the two designated Housing Commission members, who shall confer as soon as practicable to make a decision. An update will be given at each monthly meeting of the full Commission to review assistance requests and grants that were made during the prior month, so that the Commission may recommend necessary changes in the program. The determination as to whether assistance will be granted in any particular case shall be the sole and final responsibility of the designated Commission members. There is no expectation of or entitlement to assistance in any case.

All interested persons will be given an application and will be required to list household income. Such income will be subject to verification prior to approval of assistance or, as soon as practicable thereafter. At minimum, a copy of the most recently filed federal tax return for the household will be submitted with the application where feasible. The applicants shall sign a statement that the information on the application is correct to the best of their knowledge. Staff shall immediately forward the application to the designated Housing Commission members for review, and if necessary, follow-up requests for information. Part of the application will be a letter of referral from a social worker, a local clergy member of the applicant's choice, or similarly trained individual. The referral source or body may phone in a response, but, whenever practicable, a written response must be submitted to the Village staff, to be immediately forwarded to the reviewing Commission members, before the Commission members can take official action. The referral source or body shall not make a recommendation for grant assistance, but shall certify to the Commission members that "there are [or are not] other programs available to timely meet the hardship asserted by the applicant(s)."

All information requests and applications will be kept confidential. The Housing Commission shall maintain, and upon request of the Village Board shall submit, a brief summary of actions on requests for assistance referred to by case numbers alone and not names or other identifying information.

IV. Payment of Assistance

Program assistance will be made in the form of a Village-issued check in the approved amount. Under certain circumstances, the reviewing Housing Commission members may agree to offer a total amount of assistance that is spread out over a limited number of payments. Whenever possible, a check will be made payable directly to the provider of the goods and/or services, not to the applicant.

Assistance is limited to \$500.00 per individual/household. Under certain circumstances, this limit may be waived at the discretion of the reviewing Commission members on a case-by-case basis. The Commission members may limit the amount and/or period of assistance to that necessary to meet the hardship until other programs can provide assistance.

V. Status of Assistance

The Emergency Assistance Program is not an entitlement program; the fact that an applicant might be in need of assistance or appear qualified for assistance does not entitle the applicant to assistance. The decision to extend assistance is made, in each instance, on a case-by-case basis, and is made in the sole and exclusive discretion of the Housing Commission and the Village. The limitation on the amount of funds available may require the Housing Commission to extend assistance in some cases and deny it in others, based on considerations such as remaining availability of funds, relative need between applicants, and such other factors the Housing Commission may consider, in its discretion, to be relevant. The Village of Wilmette has no obligation to continue to fund or provide additional funds for the program.

VI. Privacy Policy

It is the Village's policy to treat applications for assistance as private information. Applications and information provided in requests for assistance will be treated as private information by the Village to the extent permitted by law. The amounts and payees of checks and other disbursements issued by the Village may, under certain circumstances, be required to be disclosed by the Village to auditors or to other persons as official records, so whenever possible checks will be made payable solely to the provider of the goods or services needed and requested by the applicant.