



## RENT ASSISTANCE POLICY CHANGES AND AUTOMATION OF RENT AWARD PROCESS

On the evening of January 22, 2021, the HOPE Program enacted new rent assistance policies that allow the automation of rent awards. Approximately **12,400** new rent awards for **\$57.5 million** were generated as a result of the new policies, which were developed with the dual goals of speeding up rent assistance and attracting greater landlord participation. Some of the major policy changes are:

- Employing a formula-based approach for rent awards by:
  - Using the county median rent for a two-bedroom rental unit as calculated by HUD (50<sup>th</sup> Percentile Rent Estimate), rounded up to the next \$10 for the amount of allowable monthly rent amount,
  - Multiplied by a number that includes payments for November and December 2020 and January 2021, and the number of months since April 1, 2020 that were late when the renter applied, not exceeding 6 months.
- If there is an overpayment of monthly rent due to this formula, excess amounts must first cover the arrears accrued since April 1, 2020 that are owed to the landlord.
- If the amount of the payment results in additional funds remaining after arrears are covered, the landlord must credit the remaining amount of funds to future rent.
- If there is past due rent still owed after HOPE funds have been applied, those amounts remain outstanding for the landlord and tenant to work out payment arrangements between them.
- The landlord must not evict during the time rent assistance is provided, plus **60 days from signature of the LTA**, as well as any credited time that exceeds the 60-day period.

In order to streamline the collection of required information for awards to be sent, such as landlords' e-mail addresses and updated utility bills, the HOPE Program is launching a self-service portal for applicants to upload information from their phone, laptop or computer.