



Legislation Text

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Int. No. 2081-A

By Council Members Moya, Kallos, Yeger, Chin, Cornegy, Louis, Gennaro and Rose

A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to enhancing the application for and the transparency of the emergency assistance grant program

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Chapter 1 of title 21 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding a new section 21-150 to read as follows:

§ 21-150 Emergency assistance grants program. a. Definitions. For the purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

ACCESS HRA. The term “ACCESS HRA” means the website and mobile application in which individuals obtain information on and apply for some HRA benefits, and HRA clients obtain certain HRA benefits case information.

COVID-19. The term “COVID-19” means the disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

Emergency assistance grants. The term “emergency assistance grants” means a grant of financial assistance that HRA provides to households to pay expenses such as rent or utility arrears in which HRA determines eligibility based on New York state laws and regulations.

HRA. The term “HRA” means the human resources administration.

Job center. The term “job center” has the meaning ascribed to such term in section 21-139.

b. No more than 30 days after the effective date of the local law that added this section, the commissioner shall post in the rental assistance section of the HRA website and on ACCESS HRA, and update,

as appropriate, information on emergency assistance grants. Such information shall include, but need not be limited to, the application process and required documentation.

c. Until such time that a client is able to conduct their interview on demand utilizing updated agency technology, department staff shall conduct two phone calls to an applicant who filed an emergency assistance grant application, during which the staff provides the phone number established pursuant to section 21-142.2 where the client can be provided information about their application status by a live customer service agent and self-service model, or leaves a voicemail message if an applicant does not answer the phone call with the phone number established pursuant to section 21-142.2 where the client can be provided information about their application status by a live customer service agent and self-service model.

d. No more than 150 days after the effective date of the local law that added this section, the commissioner shall include with application materials for emergency assistance grants, cash assistance and SNAP an information sheet written in plain language to inform prospective applicants which application forms and other materials the applicant must complete to apply for such benefits and whether such applicant may be required to pay back any such benefits if received.

e. Outreach on emergency assistance grants. Beginning no more than 30 days after the effective date of the local law that added this section, the commissioner, in collaboration with relevant agencies, shall conduct culturally appropriate outreach about emergency assistance grants in the designated citywide languages, as defined in section 23-1101, which shall include changes in administration as a result of COVID-19. Such outreach shall include, but need not be limited to, posting information in public spaces and on relevant government websites, including, but not limited to, the rental assistance section on the department website required by subdivision b of this section.

f. HRA shall enhance opportunities for seniors, individuals with disabilities, individuals who lack technology and individuals who lack familiarity with technology, to apply for emergency assistance grants including partnerships with elected officials, community-based organizations and non-profit service providers.

This shall also include having sufficient HRA staff to (i) help such individuals apply by telephone if such method of application is authorized or (ii) assist such individuals with the completion of paper applications, including mailing a paper application to such individuals with a self-addressed stamped envelope.

g. Reporting on emergency assistance grants. No later than June 30, 2022, and quarterly thereafter, the commissioner shall submit a report to the mayor and the speaker of the council that shall cover the quarter that began on April 1, 2022 on the administration and utilization of emergency assistance grants for the previous four months, which the commissioner shall post on the HRA website. Subsequent reports shall be posted and submitted no later than 45 days after the end of each quarter thereafter. The report shall include the number and percentage of:

1. New applications submitted solely for an emergency assistance grant;
2. Applications for emergency assistance grants that were accepted; and
3. Applications for emergency assistance grants that were not accepted.

The information reported pursuant to paragraphs 1 through 3 of this subdivision shall be disaggregated by the type of emergency assistance grant, which shall include but need not be limited to, rental arrears and utilities.

§ 2. This local law takes effect immediately.

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