

# **DHB ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO: 01-22, EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE**

**DATE:** January 11, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA)

**DISTRIBUTION:** County Departments of Social Services  
Medicaid Supervisors  
Medicaid Eligibility Staff

## **I. BACKGROUND**

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERA) is administered by the U. S. Department of the Treasury. ERA makes funding available to states, U. S. territories, local governments, and Indian tribes. These funds are made available to assist households that are unable to pay rent or utilities due to the economic impact of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE). Funding set aside for the ERA program is expected to be available through September 30, 2027. In most cases, the funds for rental and utility assistance payments are made directly to landlords and utility providers. When the landlord or utility provider chooses not to participate, rental assistance payments are made directly to the individual eligible for assistance. This administrative letter details policy regarding how to determine eligibility for Medicaid/NC Health Choice applicants/beneficiaries who receive direct payment through the ERA Program.

## **II. POLICY PRINCIPLES**

### **A. NC programs and agencies providing ERA assistance**

ERA assistance is available in all 100 counties in North Carolina. The chart below provides the name and contact information for the program in each county and for the Native American tribes in North Carolina.

The Housing Opportunities and Prevention of Evictions Program (HOPE) serves 88 counties in North Carolina, providing rent and utility assistance through the ERA. The remaining counties as well as five Native American tribes located in North Carolina each have a local program which provides rent and utility assistance through the ERA:

| <b>County/Tribe:</b>             | <b>ERA Program &amp; Contact Information:</b>  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| All counties not listed below    | HOPE Program<br>888-927-5467   |
| Buncombe                         | Emergency Rental Assistance Program<br>828-250-5500  |
| Cabarrus                         | Emergency Rental Assistance Program<br>704-920-1400, option 4 then option 6  |
| Cumberland                       | Emergency Rental Assistance Program<br>888-495-7710  |
| Durham                           | Emergency Rental Assistance Program<br>919-560-8000, option 7  |
| Forsyth                          | Emergency Rental Assistance Program<br>336-703-3700  |
| Gaston                           | Emergency Rental Assistance Program<br>704-862-7901  |
| Guilford                         | Guilford CARES<br>336-641-3000   |
| Johnston                         | Emergency Rental Assistance Program<br>844-243-7081  |
| Mecklenburg                      | COVID-19 Rent and Mortgage Program<br>Last names A-J: 980-999-1572<br>Last names K-R: 984-422-0329<br>Last names S-Z: 984-422-0285 |
| New Hanover                      | Emergency Rental Assistance Program<br>910-798-3650  |
| Union                            | Emergency Rental Assistance Program<br>980-246-8181  |
| Wake                             | House Wake! COVID-19 Financial<br>Assistance Program<br>919-899-9911   |
| Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians | 828-359-6000   |
| Coharie Tribe                    | 910-564-6909   |
| Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe       | 252-586-4017   |
| Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina   | 910-775-2543   |
| Waccamaw-Siouan Tribe            | 910-655-8778   |

**B. Non-countable, unearned income**

1. ERA should be considered special, one-time emergency assistance payments and are non-countable income for both MAGI and non-MAGI programs. See [MA-2250, Income](#), [MA-3300, Income](#), and [MA-3306, Modified Adjusted Gross Income \(MAGI\)](#).
2. ERA payments are considered non-countable income whether payment is made directly to the landlord/utility provider or directly to the Medicaid applicant/beneficiary.

**C. Excluded resources**

ERA funds are excluded from resources for applicable programs, following guidance for Federal Disaster Relief funds which states to permanently exclude this type of payment from countable resources. See [MA-2230, Financial Resources](#), and [MA-3320, Resources](#).

**D. Verification**

1. When an applicant/beneficiary reports that they have received a direct ERA payment, the caseworker should document their statement, unless the statement is questionable or incomplete. See section III for what must be provided.
2. Acceptable verification may include an award letter or other documentation from the agency or program providing the ERA.
3. If the applicant/beneficiary is unable to provide verification, the caseworker should contact the appropriate agency or program for the county or tribe where the applicant/beneficiary resides to obtain the verification. See III. A. 4. for documentation requirements. See the chart above for contact information for agencies and programs providing ERA.
4. If verification cannot be obtained, caseworkers should document and accept the applicant/beneficiary's attestation during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE). See DHB Administrative Letter 06-20 for guidance regarding self-attestation of income.
5. Verification may be required for applicable programs when the applicant/beneficiary has resources in excess of allowable limits.

**III. ELIGIBILITY SYSTEM PROCEDURES**

**A. MAGI programs**

Non-countable income is not entered as evidence in NC FAST for MAGI programs. The caseworker must document receipt of the funds in the case notes. Documentation should include:

1. The type of income received – ERA rent and utility assistance.
2. The date the income is received.
3. The program/source of the income (see chart above).
4. If the caseworker receives verbal verification from the agency/program providing assistance, document:

- date and time of the telephone call
  - name of the agency/program
  - name of the person providing the verification
  - contact information for the person providing verification
5. The reason the income is non-countable – reference DHB XX-22 Administrative Letter.


**B. Non-MAGI programs**

1. All income, countable and non-countable, must be entered in NC FAST for non-MAGI programs. See NC FAST Job Aid: Income & Expense Evidence Wizards – Income Support.
  - a. When the applicant/beneficiary reports that they have received a direct payment of ERA, enter the amount in NC FAST as income.
  - b. When entering the one-time amount of the ERA payment, choose income type “benefit” on the evidence dashboard of the Income Support Application (ISA) or Income Support Case (ISC).
  - c. From the drop-down menu on the benefit evidence, select “emergency assistance” as the benefit type.
  - d. Document the type of emergency assistance as ERA.
  - e. Review the eligibility check income calculations to ensure that the amount is listed as “non-countable unearned income”.
2. The amount of the ERA payment that remains available to the applicant/beneficiary beginning the month after receipt should be manually excluded from liquid resources prior to entering the evidence in NC FAST.
  - a. Document the case detailing the manual calculation of countable resources.
  - b. Record the amount of remaining ERA funds as a non-countable resource in the documentation.
  - c. Do not enter the ERA funds in the resource evidence in NC FAST. There is currently no option for this type of excludable resource.
  - d. At the next recertification, verify the amount, if any, of remaining ERA funds available to the applicant/beneficiary when the beneficiary has resources in excess of allowable limits. Continue to exclude from countable resources and document the case.

#### IV. IMPLEMENTATION

Policies and procedures in this DHB Administrative Letter are effective upon receipt for applications, recertifications, and changes in circumstances. This includes applications, recertifications, and changes currently in process.

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact your [Medicaid Operational Support Team representative](#).

DocuSigned by:  
  
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Dave Richard  
Deputy Secretary, NC Medicaid