

State Rental Assistance Program for The Settlement Agreement Population

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: What is the State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP)?

A1: The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) created the State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP) to serve individuals with developmental disabilities in the Settlement Agreement population who want to live independently in their own housing. The program is designed to provide rental assistance to individuals who meet the program eligibility criteria so they have the financial means to lease private market rental housing that meets their needs. Individuals can choose where they live, with whom they live, and who supports them. Services and supports are provided through sources separate from their housing, including Medicaid Waiver-funded home and community based services, natural supports, privately paid supports, and other community resources. Most SRAP administrators offer tenant-based rental assistance which means the individual can take the rent subsidy is the individual's to any rental properties within the locality that accept rental assistance. Some SRAP administrators offer project-based rental assistance where the rental assistance stays with the unit. If the individual moves from the project-based unit, he/she cannot take the rental assistance to another unit.

The Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) and Community Services Boards (CSBs) below have each entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with DBHDS to administer the State Rental Assistance Program. These "SRAP agencies" administer SRAP in the following areas:

- Alexandria Office of Housing – City of Alexandria
- Arlington Housing Assistance Bureau – Arlington County
- Bristol Redevelopment and Housing Authority – Town of Big Stone Gap, Counties of Buchanan, Dickerson, Lee, Scott, Wise, Smyth, Wythe, Tazewell, Russell and the Cities of Norton and Bristol
- Chesapeake Redevelopment and Housing Authority – the City of Chesapeake
- Danville Redevelopment and Housing Authority - Counties of Pittsylvania and Henry, and the Cities of Danville and Martinsville
- Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority – Fairfax County, the Cities of Fairfax and Falls Church and the Towns of Clifton, Herndon and Vienna
- Hampton-Newport News Community Services Board – Cities of Hampton and Newport News
- Hopewell Redevelopment and Housing Authority – City of Hopewell and a 30 mile radius from the agency's office at 350 East Poythress St., Hopewell VA 23860
- James City County Social Services – City of Williamsburg, James City County, York County
- Loudoun County Department of Family Services - Loudoun County
- Lynchburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority – the City of Lynchburg

- Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority – the City of Norfolk
- Petersburg RHA - City of Petersburg; City of Colonial Heights; County of Prince George; Towns of Matoaca, Ettrick, and Chester in Chesterfield County; and the North Dinwiddie area of Dinwiddie County
- Portsmouth RHA – City of Portsmouth
- Prince William County Housing and Community Development - County of Prince William; Cities of Manassas and Manassas Park
- Rappahannock Rapidan Community Services - Counties of Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange, Stafford and Spotsylvania, and in the City of Fredericksburg
- Region Ten Community Services Board – Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Nelson and the City of Charlottesville
- Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority – areas within a 25 mile radius of RRHA office (e.g. Henrico, Chesterfield, Hanover, Richmond)
- City of Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority – City of Roanoke, Roanoke County, Bedford City, Bedford County, Covington City and Salem City
- Valley Community Services Board - Counties of Augusta, Highland, Rockbridge and Rockingham and the Cities of Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton and Waynesboro
- Virginia Beach Department of Housing & Neighborhood Preservation – the City of Virginia Beach

Q2: How is SRAP different from the typical voucher program waiting list slots?

A2: The DBHDS State Rental Assistance Program mirrors key elements of the Housing Choice Voucher Program, for instance:

- SRAP is administered by local public housing agencies (PHAs)
- SRAP adopts the local Housing Choice Voucher program’s payment standard as the maximum rent limit for subsidized units
- SRAP requires Housing Quality Standards inspections for units that are subsidized in the program

However, instead of being placed on a waitlist with a public housing agency, support coordinators make referrals to DBHDS. DBHDS screens referrals to confirm individuals are in the Settlement Agreement Population and the household composition is eligible (e.g., the individual is going to live “independently,” e.g., not with a parent, grandparent or guardian). DBHDS then prioritizes referrals and sends them to the SRAP agencies. The SRAP agencies screen all applicants to make sure they meet the SRAP program eligibility requirements. Unlike other Housing Choice Voucher applicants, individuals who are referred by DBHDS will not have to put their name on the Housing Choice Voucher local waiting list and go through the typical waiting list process, which could take a year or more.

Q3: Who is eligible for SRAP?

A3: Eligible individuals must:

1. Be age 18 or older
2. Have a developmental disability as defined in the Code of Virginia
3. Be in one of the following categories:
 - a. transitioning from a skilled nursing facility, an intermediate care facility, a state training center, a group home or other congregate setting and meet the level of functioning criteria for a Developmental Disability waiver); OR
 - b. receiving Building Independence (BI), Family and Individual Support (FIS) or Community Living (CL) Waiver services; OR
 - c. determined eligible for and currently on a waitlist for the BI, FIS or CL Waiver; AND
4. Meet the criteria for an eligible family:
 - a. The individual cannot live with parents, grandparents, or guardians (SRAP is for individuals with developmental disabilities who are heads of their own households). The individual's SRAP household may include other relatives by birth, marriage or adoption.
 - b. The individual's SRAP household composition may include one additional person who is not related by birth, marriage or adoption. This unrelated person must certify that his/her income and other resources will be available to meet the needs of the family.
 - c. The individual's SRAP household composition may include multiple persons who are not related by birth, marriage or adoption. This household composition is known as a "mixed family." SRAP will not subsidize more than one household member who is not related by birth, marriage or adoption. The SRAP agency will prorate the rent assistance provided to a mixed family. The SRAP agency will first determine assistance as if all family members were eligible. The SRAP agency will then prorate the assistance based upon the percentage of family members that actually are eligible (e.g., the individual plus one additional unrelated person).
 - d. the individual may request a live-in aide if needed as a reasonable accommodation on the basis of disability.
5. Be currently receiving no other source of local, state or federal rent assistance, subsidy or supplement, whether tenant-based or project-based rent assistance.

At this time, only individuals who currently reside in or have stated a preference to reside in the areas listed in areas where SRAP is administered shall be referred for SRAP (see A1 above).

Once DBHDS makes the referral, eligibility for SRAP is determined by the SRAP agency based on the adjusted annual gross income and family size. Eligibility is limited to U.S. citizens and specified categories of non-citizens

who have eligible immigration status. In general, the family's income may not exceed 50% of the median income for the county or metropolitan area in which the family chooses to live. The SRAP agency serving your community can provide you with the income limits for your area and family size.

During the application process, the local SRAP agency will collect information on household income, assets, and family composition. SRAP agency staff will verify this information with other agencies, your employer and bank, and will use the information to determine program eligibility and the amount of the housing assistance payment. The local SRAP agency will also request a release to perform a criminal record review for each adult age 18 and over in the household to determine whether any adults in the household have criminal histories that would exclude their participation in SRAP.

Q4: What responsibilities do I have when I receive a SRAP rental certificate?

A4: Once you receive your certificate, the SRAP agency will review your Family Obligations with you. These are requirements that you *must* abide by as a participant in SRAP. You will also sign a lease with a landlord. A lease is a legal agreement between you and the owner or manager of the rental housing that explains the rules you and the owner must follow for you to live there.

The Family Obligations agreement and the lease include many of your responsibilities. For example, you must:

- provide accurate and complete information about household income/ household size and any changes to the local housing agency in a timely manner;
- pay the tenant portion of the rent and any utilities on time and in full;
- not damage the unit beyond normal wear and tear;
- notify the local housing agency if you intend to terminate your lease.

Q5: What housing expenses am I responsible for as a tenant in rental housing?

A5: You are responsible for certain **upfront costs** associated with moving to a new home, such as the rental application fee, security deposit, furniture, bedding, curtains, cooking/cleaning equipment and supplies, dishes, a telephone, etc. In addition, you are responsible for certain **regular, ongoing housing expenses**, including the tenant's rent share, any utilities not included in the rent (gas, electric, water/sewer, trash, cable, phone), and any regular housekeeping supplies (e.g., light bulbs, batteries for the smoke detector, trash bags, cleaning supplies, etc.). Finally, you may be responsible for **special fees** such as fees for late rent, fees if the landlord goes to court to evict you, fees for damages you cause to the apartment that are not normal wear and tear, fees for services that the landlord provides (e.g., visitor parking permits or pool passes) or anything else the lease requires.

In June 2015 and 2016, DBHDS provided six Community Services Boards (CSBs) Flexible Funding to assist with the cost of upfront expenses in an effort to increase access to and the availability of integrated, independent housing options for individuals with a developmental disability that meet the criteria for the target population as defined in the Settlement Agreement between the Commonwealth and the U.S. Department of Justice.

The following CSBs serve as a fiscal intermediary in the region in which they are located:

Region 1 Agent by CSB	Name	Phone/ Fax
Region Ten CSB	Trinita Harris Turner Trinita.Harris-Turner@regionten.org	(T) (434) 972-1852

Region 2 Agent by CSB	Name	Phone/ Fax
Alexandria CSB	Elizabeth San Pedro elizabeth.sanpedro@alexandriava.gov	(T) (703) 746-3334 (F) (703) 746-3690
Arlington Dept of Human Services	La Voyce Reid Lreid@arlingtonva.us	(T) (703) 228-1731 (
Fairfax-Falls Church CSB	Mike Suppa Mike.Suppa@fairfaxcounty.gov	(T) (703) 383-8412
Loudoun Dept of MHSADS	Lisa Snider Lisa.Snider@loudoun.gov	(T) (571) 258-3246
Prince William CSB	Jackie Jackson Turner jjackson@pwcgov.org	(T) (703) 792.7769
Region 3 Agent by CSB	Name	Phone/ Fax
New River Valley CSB	Lauren Tate ltate@nrvc.org	(T) (540) 961-8313 x1182
Region 4 Agent by CSB	Name	Phone/ Fax
Henrico MHDS	Mary Beth Schutte sch24@henrico.us	(T) (804) 727-8500
Region 5 Agent by CSB	Name	Phone/ Fax
Hampton Newport News CSB (North of Tunnel)	Joy Cipriano joyc@hnncsb.org	(T) (757) 788-0066
Norfolk CSB (South of Tunnel)	Steve Stewart steve.stewart@norfolk.gov Amber Patterson amber.patterson@norfolk.gov	(T) (757) 823-1683 (T) (757) 642-0147

Q6: What housing expenses will the flexible funding cover?

A6: Flexible Funding can be used to offset certain costs to (1) help individuals make the initial transition to independent housing and (2) to prevent individuals from losing their independent housing. Below is a list of housing expenses that Flexible Funding can help cover. Please see the Flexible Funding Guidelines at <https://dbhds.virginia.gov/developmental-services/housing/flexible-funding/> for details.

Eligible Uses to Make Initial Transition to Housing (up to \$5,000 per individual):

- Temporary rental assistance
- up to two months' rent to secure a unit and have environmental modifications completed OR
- first month's rent to a private owner if rent subsidy cannot be paid at the time of lease signing
- Initial housing transition services and supports (IHTSS) including
 - security deposits
 - utility connection fees and deposits
 - moving expenses (a mover must be licensed & insured)
 - essential furniture and household supplies (not to exceed \$2,000 of the \$5,000 cap)

- rent arrearages
- temporary hotel stay for individuals who would be homeless
- community housing guide (if not covered by Medicaid Waiver)
- shared living start-up services
- Environmental modifications and assistive technology not covered by Medicaid Waiver

Eligible Uses to Maintain Housing (up to \$5,000 per individual):

- Emergency rent payment & associated late fees
- Last resort utility assistance
- Housekeeping activities
- Unit repairs
- Temporary relocation if unit is not habitable
- Temporary hotel stay prior to being re-housed
- security deposits and moving expenses for subsequent transitions (mover must be licensed & insured)
- rent arrearages
- community housing guide (not covered by Medicaid Waiver)

Q7: What kinds of places can I live in using rental assistance?

A7: A unit could be in a multifamily apartment building, a single family home e.g., a two BR house), a manufactured or mobile home, etc. The rent plus the utilities the tenant pays must be within the maximum subsidy limit for SRAP. Assistance will not be approved for individuals who desire to live in any of the following settings (this list is not all inclusive):

- Nursing homes or facilities providing continuous medical or psychiatric care
- DBHDS or DSS licensed settings (including group homes and assisted living facilities)
- boarding houses
- college or school dormitories
- units not permitted to be rented as part of another residence by local building/zoning ordinances
- non-residential settings (shelters, vacation timeshares, extended stay hotels)
- units that have a DBHDS-licensed service provider as a co-signer or guarantor on the lease

Q8: How will I find a place to live that will take my SRAP certificate?

A8: Your Support Coordinator and others that you trust can help you find rental housing. In many instances, the PHA has a list of landlords who participate in the program, and www.virginiahousingsearch.com can be reviewed for rental housing options. You can also consult the DBHDS Housing Coordinator in your region (see the last page).

Q9: How much will my rent be?

A9: There are many elements that go into calculating the amount of rent you will contribute toward rent (income, expenses, deductions and allowances). The local SRAP agency will determine the subsidy or certificate size you are eligible for based on the number of people in your household. The amount of rent you contribute is based on your income. Once the SRAP agency verifies your income, they can give you a better idea of the monthly amount you will contribute toward rent and the maximum amount of rent plus tenant paid utilities SRAP will subsidize. The latter amount is important to know when searching for a unit. Typically, a family pays no more

than 30% to 40% of their adjusted monthly income, as determined by the SRAP guidelines, not IRS adjusted income, toward rent and utilities.

Q10: Can I live with a friend? What about with my brother or sister? Or with a caregiver?

A10: It is possible to live with friends, a caregiver or family members, excluding parents, grandparents and legal guardians (please see Q and A #15 below.) The relationship and type of support these individuals provide will determine how they are classified as members of your household. Additional household members may have to meet the same program requirements as the program applicant, e.g., income limits, background checks, etc. Please consult with the SRAP agency for more information regarding who can live with you and the associated implications.

Q11: Who can make a referral? What is the process?

A11: Only CSB Support Coordinators and CSB-Contracted Support Coordination Agencies can refer an eligible individual. The support coordinator will complete a Housing Assessment and Referral with the individual to verify the individual is in the target population, identify any barriers to housing, determine the household composition, develop a sustainable budget for independent housing, identify supports needed to obtain and maintain housing, and assess housing needs (location, features, unit size, etc.). The support coordinator will also complete a Housing Action Plan to develop strategies for addressing barriers, budget issues, support needs, securing household members, etc.

Q12: How will DBHDS decide who is referred to a SRAP agency for SRAP?

A12: DBHDS will only process completed and signed referral packages. If a form is resubmitted for any reason or additional documentation or information is required, DBHDS will date and time stamp the form when the completed form and the additional documentation/information is received by DBHDS. Referrals are placed in the queue for prioritization after DBHDS reviews the Housing Assessment and Referral and the Housing Action Plan and determines the individual has met the following five criteria:

1. The individual possesses critical housing documents, including a birth certificate or proof of citizenship/legal residency in the U.S., a social security card, and government issued photo identification.
2. The individual has a feasible plan to address major housing barriers and cover upfront costs to obtain housing.
3. If necessary, the individual has identified another person or persons to live with him/her as part of the household (friends, roommates, live-in aides, etc.). Any other persons are prepared to supply the same critical housing documents and complete a background check.
4. The individual has a sustainable budget for independent housing, in which expenses do not exceed income.
5. The individual has a person centered individual support plan (ISP) that, at a minimum, reflects access to resources, services and paid/unpaid supports that address functional limitations/needs for assistance in housing as identified in the VIDES.

Q13: Will DBHDS prioritize or provide a preference for individuals?

A13: Yes. The purpose of the SRAP Program is to provide opportunities for individuals in the Settlement Agreement population to move to their own rental housing. This gives them the opportunity to pursue housing options other than institutions, private intermediate care facilities (ICF-IDD), nursing homes, group homes, sponsor homes, family homes, etc.

DBHDS will make all referrals to SRAP agencies for eligible individuals based on the prioritization structure below:

- **Priority #1:** Individuals who live in congregate settings, including skilled nursing facilities, intermediate care facilities, state training centers, and group homes
- **Priority #2:** Individuals who are either
 - a. Homeless, as evidenced by documentation from the support coordinator that the individual has slept in a shelter, on the street, or in a place not meant for human habitation for the last three nights, or at risk of homelessness, as evidenced by a Writ of Possession for the individual's current residence;
 - b. Paying more than 50% of their own gross monthly income toward their own rental housing (based upon verification of income and current rent); OR
 - c. Experiencing an imminent threat to health and safety in their housing, as documented by Adult Protective Services.
- **Priority #3:** Individuals who live with their families of origin

SRAP agencies that administer the State Rental Assistance Program are permitted to establish a local preference to serve individuals who currently reside in the agency's catchment area or who resided in the agency's catchment area prior to placement in a residential program outside the catchment area

DBHDS will prioritize referrals for the SRAP agency's rental assistance slots as follows:

- Priority 1 in PHA catchment area
- Priority 1 outside PHA catchment area
- Priority 2 in PHA catchment area
- Priority 2 outside PHA catchment area
- Priority 3 in PHA catchment area
- Priority 3 outside PHA catchment area

Q14: Will DBHDS make referrals for individuals who currently lease their own rental housing?

A14: DBHDS reserves the right to make referrals for individuals who are currently leasing and/or living in their own rental housing and paying more than 50% of their monthly gross income towards rent and utilities. The Support Coordinator must be able to document and justify why the rental assistance is needed and how not receiving the rental assistance could put the individual in jeopardy of losing their housing and becoming institutionalized or placed in a less integrated setting.

Q15: Will DBHDS make referrals for individuals that want their parent(s), grandparents, legal guardian, etc. to live with them?

A15: DBHDS will not make referrals for individuals who want to live with their parent(s), grandparents, legal guardian, etc. This living situation is contrary to a primary goal of the State Rental Assistance Program, which is to enable individuals to establish their own households, independent of their families of origin.

Q16: What happens if I want to live in a locality that is not currently accepting SRAP referrals?

A16: DBHDS will not make SRAP referrals in localities which are not listed in **A1**. DBHDS will continue to maintain a referral list and all referrals will be date and time stamped; according to when they are deemed complete by DBHDS. When a local agency decides to accept referrals from DBHDS, eligible individuals will be referred in the priority order outlined in Answer A13 above and the date and time in which their referral was received and deemed complete.

Q17: What happens if I am not ready to move when my name comes to the top of the referral list?

A17: If DBHDS receives a referral for individuals who are not ready to move within 120 days of being notified that their name is at the top of referral list, they will lose their place on the referral list, and must be referred again.

Q18: What if I need to make changes to my apartment to make it more accessible?

A18: You may need **assistive technology or environmental modifications** to help make your apartment more accessible before you move. You, your support coordinator or another member of your support team may need to make a reasonable accommodation or modification request to the landlord or property owner.

Assistive technology is specialized medical equipment, supplies, devices, controls and appliances that help people perform activities of daily living or function or communicate in the environment in which they live.

Environmental modifications are physical changes to the residence (such as permanently installed fixtures or changes to the structure of the site) that ensure the health and safety of the individual or that enable him or her to function with greater independence at home and not require institutionalization.

Q19: What is a reasonable accommodation?

A19: A reasonable accommodation is an exception or change that a housing provider makes to rules, policies, services or regulations that will assist a resident or applicant with a disability to take full advantage of a housing program and/or dwelling. Fair housing laws require providers to make reasonable accommodations in their rules, policies, practices or services to give a person with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling unit or common area. Accommodations are “reasonable” when they are practical and feasible. For more information related to reasonable accommodations: please click the following link:

<http://homeofva.org/Portals/0/Images/PDF/GuideforReasonableAccommodations.pdf>

One type of reasonable accommodation some SRAP participants use is a **live-in aide**. A live in aide is a person who resides with one or more elderly persons, or near elderly persons or persons with disabilities, and who:

1. is determined to be essential to the care and well-being of the persons;
2. is not obligated for the support of the persons; and
3. would not be living in the unit except to provide the necessary supportive services.

Relatives, excluding parents, grandparents and legal guardians, may be approved as live in aides on a case by case basis by the PHA if they meet all of the criteria defining a live in aide and can demonstrate that the relationship to the individual is an arm’s length transaction, e.g. the relative would not otherwise be living in the unit. However, a relative who serves as a live-in aide is not considered a family member and would not be considered a remaining member of a tenant family.

Q20: What is a reasonable modification?

A20: A reasonable modification is an alteration to the physical premises allowing a person with a disability to overcome obstacles that interfere with his/her use of the dwelling and/or common areas. These are typically structural changes to the housing that are necessary to accommodate a person with a disability.

Reasonable modifications can include (but are not limited to):

- A structural change or repair in an apartment or another part of the complex that would make it easier for a person with a disability to live in the dwelling;
- Allowing the installation of a ramp at a unit where there are only stairs;
- Modifying door knobs to levers for someone with mobility impairments; or
- Altering a residence so that it can be accessed and used by a person in a wheelchair, such as widening a door so one can get through it with their wheelchair.

For more information related to reasonable modifications: please click the following link:

<http://homeofva.org/Portals/0/Images/PDF/GuideforReasonableAccomodations.pdf>

Q21: If I don't like living on my own, may I go back to my previous setting?

A21: DBHDS strongly encourages you to review and follow the Family Obligations Agreement of the State Rental Assistance Program and the rules in your lease agreement, both of which are typically 12 month commitments. If you fail to follow the SRAP rules, you risk losing your assistance by being terminated from the program. Participants who do not follow the rules specified in their lease agreement may risk losing their security deposit or pay the equivalent of up to two months of rent for breaking their lease. Moreover, you can only go back to your prior living arrangement if there is an opening and the provider/facility agrees to accept you. So, it is important to communicate with your team if something is not going well or if you are feeling lonely. There may be other ways to solve the problem first!

If you have more questions about SRAP, contact your DBHDS Regional Housing Coordinator (see contact information on the next page).

Region 1 Western

Housing Specialist: Marie Fraticelli
Please email: marie.fraticelli@dbhds.virginia.gov for assistance
Phone: 434-953-7146

Region 2 - Northern

Housing Specialist: Jeannie Cummins Eisenhour
Email: j.cummins@dbhds.virginia.gov
Phone: 804-836-4308

Region 3 - Southwestern

Housing Specialist: Anna Bowman
Please email: anna.bowman@dbhds.virginia.gov for assistance
Phone: 804-839-0476

Region 4 - Central

Housing Specialist: Sheree Hilliard
Email: sheree.hilliard@dbhds.virginia.gov
Phone: 804-629-1675

Region 5 - Eastern

Housing Specialist: Kim Rodgers
Email: kimberly.rodgers@dbhds.virginia.gov
Phone: 804-629-1674

