



American Rescue Plan – Update 1

The May Report focuses on current housing assistance in both counties and selected housing funding provided by The American Rescue Plan (The ARP).

Please share and distribute as you see fit.

HOUSING ASSISTANCE – AVAILABLE NOW

OUR (Opportunities for Utilities and Rental Assistance) Florida Program

This is a new program that opened on May 10, 2021. Apply now. Applications will be processed in the order received beginning Monday May 17, 2021.

Apply at: www.ourflorida.com

OUR Florida, is a statewide Emergency Rental Assistance Program, administered through the Department of Children and Families. It will benefit working-class families who have suffered due to the pandemic's devastating economic impact. It provides help with rent and utility payments.

OUR Florida accepts applications for families in need of aid, regardless of their city of residence. The program focuses on low-income renters whose household income is at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI), which varies by county. The program will prioritize renters with income at or below 50% AMI and/or families who have experienced unemployment within the past 90 days.

Apply here: <https://www.ourflorida.com/>

Our Florida call center: 833-493-0594

Sarasota County Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Apply here: <https://www.scgov.net/government/health-and-human-services/covid-19-coronavirus/sarasota-county-cares/emergency-rental-assistance-program>



Eligible Sarasota County households may receive up to 12 months of assistance, which includes arrears, and up to three months of prospective rent. Individuals will be awarded assistance based on their specific documented needs for delinquent rent payments that have accumulated due to COVID-19 on or after April 1, 2020.

Household Eligibility:

- Renting households at or below 80% area median income (AMI) facing homelessness or housing instability due to inability to pay rent and/or utilities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such households must be able to demonstrate the impact of COVID-19.
- Additionally, applicants can receive utility payments (water, sewer, electric, trash), which will be made directly to the utility companies.

Sarasota County provides in-person help for applicants who have trouble applying. The website lists six Ambassador locations, three of which need no appointment:

- Betty J. Johnson North Sarasota Public Library, 2801 Newtown Blvd., Sarasota, FL 34234. Phone: 941-861-7368
- Fruitville Public Library, 100 Coburn Road, Sarasota, FL 34240. Phone 941-861-7368
- Goodwill Selby Newtown, 1781 Dr. Martin Luther King Way, Sarasota, FL 34234. Phone 941-861-7368

If you have questions or have trouble applying, you can call 941-861-RENT (7368) Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Manatee County Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Apply here:

https://www.mymanatee.org/departments/redevelopment_economic_opportunity/community_development/manatee_cares/emergency_rental_assistance_program

The Manatee County Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERA) provides funds to renters in Manatee County and its municipalities who are delinquent on rent and in need of rental payment assistance due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Funds will be provided as a grant for rent and landlord-paid utilities for approved applicants. Eligible renters may receive grant funds up to 12 months of assistance, if needed, or through November 2021, whichever is less. Funds will be paid directly to the landlord.

To be eligible for this grant, a resident must meet the eligibility guidelines and file an application through the online portal.

For assistance, call your landlord and ask for help, or contact a Program Navigator at: (941) 745-6270.

Emergency Housing Vouchers

The ARP provides \$5 billion for emergency housing vouchers for individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, or are victims of domestic violence or human trafficking.

These funds must be used by PHAs to provide and renew emergency vouchers, and to cover certain costs.

70,000 housing choice vouchers will be available throughout the U.S. to local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) such as the Sarasota Housing Authority and Manatee Housing Authority, and PHAs will be notified of the number of vouchers designated for them within two months of the ARP's enactment.

HUD also informs us that now, through June 1, 2021, PHAs will be given more information and therefore more information on this program should be available soon.

Sarasota Housing Authority: <http://sarasotahousing.org/>

Administration Office & Mailing Address:
269 S. Osprey Avenue, Suite 100
Sarasota, FL 34236
Main Phone Number: (941) 361-6210

Manatee County Housing Authority: <https://www.manateehousing.com/>



Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HVC) Department
538 East 48th Street Court
Bradenton, Florida 34208
941-756-3974
TDD: 800-955-8770
TTY: 800-955-8771
Fax: 941-238-9108

Homeowner Assistance Fund

The ARP provides nearly \$10 billion to be administered by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to help homeowners who are behind on their mortgage and utility payments avoid foreclosure and eviction.

The U.S. Treasury issued guidance to the states for the use of these funds on April 14, 2021 and allocation to states is expected later this spring. The Treasury Department will control the terms of this homeowner assistance through contracts with the individual states.

We know that the use of these funds includes mortgage payments; principal reduction; interest rate reductions; reinstatement after forbearance; payment assistance for utilities, taxes, homeowners insurance; and a catch-all for “any other assistance to promote housing stability.” Homeowners must have experienced financial hardship after January 21, 2020.

ERA Homeowner Assistance Funds are not available now, but more information on this assistance for home owners should be coming soon.

The law prioritizes funds for homeowners who have experienced the greatest hardships, leveraging local and national income indicators to maximize the impact.

The source for Florida state information on the Homeowner Assistance Fund is:
<https://www.floridahousing.org/home>

Florida Housing Finance Corporation
227 N. Bronough Street, Suite 5000
Tallahassee, Florida 32301



(850) 488-4197

(850) 488-9809 – fax

As of today's date, neither Manatee County, nor Sarasota County offer homeowner mortgage assistance.

Homelessness Assistance

The ARP provides \$5 billion (throughout the U.S.) for rental assistance and supportive services for the homeless, those at risk of homelessness, and victims of domestic violence or human trafficking. These funds are to be allocated using the HOME Investment Partnership program formula within 30 days of the ARP enactment.

The HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) provides grants to states and localities that communities use - often in partnership with local nonprofit groups - to fund a wide range of activities including building, buying, and/or rehabilitating affordable housing for rent or homeownership or providing direct rental assistance to low-income households.

The Sarasota Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) administers the HOME Investment Partnership program on behalf of the City of Sarasota and Sarasota County (Sarasota Consortium):

<https://www.scgov.net/government/planning-and-development-services/office-of-housing-and-community-development>

The City of Sarasota appears to have received \$3,170,598 under the ARP for this program.

Research indicates that Manatee County received \$2,362,769 from the ARP to create affordable housing and services for people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

The contact for Home Program in Manatee County is:

Denise Thomas

(941) 748-4501, ext. 3474

Housing Counseling



\$100 million is allocated for housing counseling administered through NeighborWorks America. At least 40 percent of these funds must be given to housing counseling organizations serving minority and low-income homeowners, renters, and people experiencing homelessness.

NeighborWorks America does not currently list Sarasota or Manatee locations.

We'll provide an update in upcoming reports.