

Emergency Housing Issues

I couldn't pay the rent and now I'm being evicted. Can I get help paying to stop the eviction?

- You can apply for emergency rental assistance from your local Department of Social Services (DSS.) Please see page 4 for county specific information.
- You must show that you are being evicted because you owe back rent (arrears). DSS requires court papers or a letter from your landlord threatening to sue you if you don't pay. The letter from your landlord should have a breakdown of the exact months and amounts you owe. The letter does not have to be a formal court document. You must have a future ability to pay the rent. Also, in most instances, DSS does not have to help you if you have had assistance with rent arrears within the last five (5) years.
- DSS may ask for the money back, either by recouping future cash assistance or by having you sign a repayment agreement.
- DSS must interview you the same day you apply if you tell them you have an emergency. They must give you a written notice the same day. DSS must tell you if they need more documentation from you and give you a written list with the due date. DSS must also give you a notice if they deny your application.

How can I get help with moving/storage expenses?

- DSS can sometimes help with moving expenses and storage. Go to your local DSS office listed on page 4.
- DSS can only pay for moving expenses if you are moving to a less expensive apartment or you are under extreme circumstances. Extreme circumstances can include eviction, homelessness, transition out of a shelter, leaving a dangerous or abusive environment, natural disasters, building condemnation, or serious medical conditions that require different housing arrangements.
- You will need two quotes from moving companies for your application. DSS can provide you a list of approved movers.
- If you need help with storage, DSS can help while you are in a temporary living situation.
- You are not eligible if you are in a congregate care program or if you have a Temporary Assistance sanction.
- DSS will only pay for essential household items (furniture, appliances, personal papers, clothing, etc.) for your household size.

How can I get help with security for a new apartment?

- DSS may provide a "security agreement". A security agreement is an agreement DSS makes with you and your landlord promising to pay damages or unpaid rent you owe when you move out. In return, the landlord will let you move in without paying a cash security deposit. If you get a security agreement and DSS ends up having to pay your landlord, it may be an overpayment you have to pay back.
- DSS only provides a security agreement if you are moving to a cheaper place or if you are in extreme circumstances. For DSS, extreme circumstances including eviction, homelessness, transition out of a shelter, leaving a dangerous or abusive environment, natural disasters, building condemnation, or serious medical conditions that require different housing arrangements.
- You cannot get a security agreement after you move in/take possession of the apartment. Make sure you complete the application process and get the approval *before* you move in.

Can I get assistance with transportation and child care when I am looking for temporary housing?

If you have a minor child, DSS must help you with transportation or child care costs to search for permanent housing.

I have no place to stay, what can I do?

- If you have no place to stay, go your local DSS office. They must give you shelter placement as long as you are eligible.
- You can contact 211 in Erie, Wyoming, and Orleans Counties if you need shelter when DSS is closed (evenings/nights, weekends, and holidays). Contact Community Missions if you are in Niagara County. Their phone number is [\(716\) 285-3403](tel:7162853403).
- You can contact shelters directly and ask for a bed. Not all shelters require an approval from ECDSS.

How do I know if I am eligible for shelter?

- You must apply for shelter at DSS. The application process varies but you should go in person if at all possible. You will need to fill out the application. Be sure to mark "no place to stay/homeless" on the front and anything else that applies to you.
- DSS must do an interview and assessment the same day you apply. They must also give you a written notice with their decision the same day you apply.

- You must be able to verify your identity, your citizenship/immigration status, and who is in your household. The DSS may already have that information if you get any benefits from them (ex. SNAP, Temporary Assistance).
- DSS may ask for more information. You should tell them if you do not have it and ask for a “pre-investigation” placement so you have time to get the documents.
- Tell your worker if you need help getting documents. The worker must help you if you cannot get the documents yourself.
- Tell your worker if you need any reasonable accommodations for a disabling condition. For example, people with mobility difficulties may need a first floor placement. Your worker must discuss this with you and tell you whether they can give you the accommodation in writing.

LOCATION SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS

ERIE COUNTY APPLICATIONS

- You can pick application materials up at the Erie County Department of Social Services (ECDSS) application hub at 158 Pearl Street, Buffalo, NY 14202. You can call (716) 858-6265 to ask ECDSS to send the application packet in the mail. You can turn completed applications in at the ECDSS office, mail them, or fax them to (716) 858-2628. You can fax the completed application to ECDSS at 716-858-6834.
- Most of the information and forms you need are available online at <https://www3.erie.gov/temporaryassistance/emergency-services>.

Erie County Shelters

City Mission (for men)	Cornerstone (for women and children)	Little Portions Friary
100 E. Tupper St. Buffalo, NY 14203 (716) 854-8181	150 E. North St. Buffalo, NY 14203 (716) 854-8181	1305 Main Street Buffalo, NY 14209 (716) 882-5705

PLEASE NOTE: If you are fleeing domestic violence, please call Haven House at (716) 842-2750. If you do not qualify for their shelter, apply at ECDSS and tell them you are fleeing a domestic violence situation. Mark “domestic violence” on the first page of the application.

NIAGARA COUNTY APPLICATIONS

- Apply at the Niagara County Department of Social Services at either their office in Niagara Falls (301 10th Street Niagara Falls NY 14301) or their Lockport office (20 East Avenue Lockport NY 14094.)
- You can also write to the relevant office or call them at 716-278-8400 and ask them to mail you an application.

Niagara County Shelters

Community Mission	Gospel Rescue (for men)	Lockport Cares
1570 Buffalo Ave Niagara Falls, NY 14303 (716) 285-3403	1317 Portage Rd Niagara Falls, NY 14301 (716) 205-8805	188 Genesee St Lockport, NY 14094 716-438-2273

WYOMING COUNTY APPLICATIONS

- Apply at the Wyoming County Department of Social Services office in person at 466 North Main Street Warsaw, NY 14569 or call them at 585-786-8900 and ask them to mail you an application.

GENESEE COUNTY APPLICATIONS

- Apply at the Genesee County Department of Social Services office in person at 5130 E. Main Street Batavia, NY 14020 or call them at 585-344-2580 and ask them to mail you an application.

ORLEANS COUNTY APPLICATIONS

- Apply at the Orleans County Department of Social Services office in person at their office at 14016 Route 31 West Albion, NY 14411-9365 or call them at 585-589-7000 x4 and ask them to mail you an application.