

## Emergency Housing Issues

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### I couldn't pay the rent and now I'm being evicted. How can I get help to pay back rent?

- \* You can apply for emergency rental assistance from DSS. Go to 478 Main Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Buffalo.
- \* 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. In order to get assistance with rent arrears 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 5 years.
- \* Under certain circumstances, DSS may ask for the money back, either by recouping future cash assistance or by having you sign a repayment agreement.
- \* Tell the worker that you have an emergency, you must be seen that day. Any denial of assistance must be in writing. If DSS is willing to help, but needs more documentation from you, you should be given a list of items needed and a date to return. If your emergency need must be met the same day, DSS must issue a guarantee letter that day if you are eligible. If DSS denies your request, it must be in writing.
- \* If DSS refuses to pay your back rent, and your landlord is threatening to evict you, call our office immediately at 847-0650 and ask for the Public Benefits Unit. We will review DSS' decision with you. We will tell you how to challenge the decision. We may agree to take your case.

### I need to move, how can I find an affordable apartment?

- \* You will need to find an apartment that is affordable. The maximum amount you can pay for rent varies according to household size and utilities. DSS uses these numbers as a guideline (if your income is public assistance). If your income is higher, they may allow a larger rental expense:

1 person household	2 person household	3 person household	4 person household	5 person household
\$300-325	\$400	\$475	\$525	\$575

- \* When you find an apartment you will need to bring your completed landlord statement to DSS so you can get your security agreement.
- \* Belmont Housing Resources of WNY (1195 Main St, 884-7791) and the Rental Assistance Corp. (470 Franklin St, 882-0063) usually have apartment listings for individuals who need to find affordable housing. If you want counseling or help in finding an affordable home, you can also contact Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) at 854-1400. If you are homeless you can call Crisis Services at 834-3131.

- \* You can apply for Section 8 assistance at the Rental Assistance Center and at the Belmont Housing Resources of WNY. The waiting list for Section 8 is very long; however, they often have shorter lists for individuals who meet criteria for various special programs. Always ask if you might be eligible for one of these special Section 8 programs. You can call Belmont at 884-7791 and the Rental Assistance Center (RAC) at 882-0063. BMHA also provides Section 8 vouchers on a limited basis.
- \* You can apply for public housing at the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority. BMHA has guidelines for acceptance, however, if you are denied you can ask for a review and contact our office for advice. You can call 855-6774 or go to 245 Elmwood Ave., Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM and 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM.

### **How can I get help with moving/storage expenses?**

- \* DSS can sometimes help with moving expenses and storage. Go to 478 Main Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor and ask for assistance.
- \* DSS can only pay for moving expenses if you are moving to a less expensive apartment or you are under 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.
- \* DSS will only provide moving expenses if they determine the apartment you are moving to is affordable. If you are on Public Assistance, your new rent should be no more than the chart on the previous page. If you have other income, DSS may allow a higher rent.
- \* If you are denied moving expenses or you have questions about this program, feel free to contact our office at 847-0650.
- \* If you need help with storage, DSS can help while you are living in a temporary living situation.

### **How can I get help getting a security agreement?**

1. DSS may provide a "security agreement". A security agreement is a form DSS gives the landlord promising to pay damages you owe when you move out. In return, the landlord will let you move in without paying a security deposit. If you get a security agreement and DSS ends up having to pay your landlord, it can be taken out of your grant.
2. To apply, go to 478 Main Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor.
3. 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 are: 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.
4. If you are denied a security agreement or you have questions about this program, feel free to contact our office at 847-0650.

**I am being evicted and I am going to a temporary shelter, but I can't take all my things. What can I do?**

- \* DSS can pay to move your belongings to a storage place and pay to store them, if you are financially eligible and in a temporary living situation.
- \* DSS can also pay for your things to be moved out of storage and moved to your permanent home.
- \* You can apply for this benefit at Window #5 or #6 at the Rath Building if you have an Emergency Housing worker. Otherwise, to to 478 Main Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor.

**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 help parents to search for permanent housing. DSS can provide you with either bus passes or tokens.

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

- 1) If you have no place to stay, go to Window #5 or #6 at the Rath Building and ask for assistance. DSS must place you in a shelter or a hotel room if the shelters are full.
- 2) Crisis Services (834-3131) can also help place people in shelters and provide other assistance after hours.
- 3) You can contact shelters directly and ask for a bed. The largest shelters in Buffalo are:

<b>City Mission (for men)</b>	<b>Cornerstone (for women and children)</b>	<b>Little Portions (for adults)</b>	<b>Salvation Army</b>	<b>Haven House</b>
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	960 Main Street Buffalo, NY 14202 (716) 884-4798	451 Ellicot Sta. Buffalo, NY 14201 (716) 884-6000

- \* If you are already on Public Assistance and you find yourself homeless, make sure your caseworker knows of your changed circumstances to avoid an overpayment. If they pay your shelter allowance and you have no rent expense, you will have to pay the money back.

You are still entitled to a personal needs allowance while you are at the shelter. Your Temporary Assistance grant may be reduced, not eliminated. If you are staying at a shelter that provides 3 meals a day, you are entitled to \$45 per person. If the shelter provides less than 3 meals a day, you are entitled to \$166 (for a single person). You are always entitled to Food Stamps even if the shelter provides 3 meals a day.