

Subject: Tribal Indian Housing Block Grant COVID-19
Emergency Housing Policy

**SAMISH INDIAN NATION
Tribal Indian Housing Block Grant COVID-19
Emergency Housing Policy**

To Prevent, prepare for, and/or Respond to Native Families that have been impacted by COVID-19, including maintaining normal operations and services.

Funding is provided by Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) and Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act)

If any provision of these policies conflicts with the regulations adopted by CARES, Federal Regulations CFR 24.1000 shall prevail.

The Tribe determined providing financial assistance to tribal members under the terms of this policy fits the criteria for expenditure of funds under the CARES Act. In enacting this program, the Tribe evaluated the need of its citizens and determined our citizens have experienced financial loss due to loss of jobs, decreased income, changes in household composition and other financial losses caused by the health care crisis with respect to the COVID 19. These financial losses have hampered their ability to pay monthly housing costs, caused loss of housing, or required our citizens to live in over- crowded housing.

A. Eligibility

1. At least one member of the household must be enrolled in a Federally recognized Indian tribe.

B. Income Documentation Waiver during COVID-19

1. Families unable to provide documented proof of income, due to COVID-19, can complete a self-declaration of income until such time as documented proof of income can be obtained.

C. Housing Inspection Waiver during COVID-19

1. During COVID-19, normal Housing Quality Inspections will be waived. However, housing staff will be required, as best as possible, to ensure that the home meets basic housing standards. This can be accomplished by contacting the landlord and asking for a Move in /Move out inspection; having potential client take pictures of the unit – emphasizing on smoke detectors, running water, etc. This must be documented and maintained in the client file.

When it is safe, the Tribal Housing Department will utilize the housing quality standards adopted by the Tribe in determining if the unit is a decent, healthy and safe place to live or if the unit is safe, sanitary and in good repair.

If the unit does not pass the inspection, assistance can be approved if the owner/landlord is willing to make necessary repairs to bring the unit up to the minimum requirements. If the owner/ landlord is not willing to make the repairs required to bring the unit up to the minimum requirements, the Tribal Housing Department may not help the applicant.

D. Verbal Consent

1. Staff Citizens are required to obtain written consent/Release of Information. Staff Citizens that are not able to obtain written permission, documented telephonic consent is allowable. Staff Citizens must obtain written permission the first time the client is seen in-person.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

This Policy pertains to the following programs:

Housing Support Services:

1. Homelessness Prevention

Native Families that have received a 3-day notice to pay or vacate or received an eviction notice due to job loss or a decrease in income due to the COVID-19, will receive temporary rent subsidies and housing-focused case management. This service is also available for Families that need to relocate to a less expense housing unit, allowing families to save money on housing cost. ***An extensive list of all services that are eligible can be found on our Housing Web Page.***

2. Rapid Rehousing

Native Families that have become homeless due to COVID-19, will be provided with housing placement, move in assistance, and temporary rental subsidies. Services will include housing-focused case management. ***An extensive list of all services that are eligible can be found on our Housing Web Page.***

3. Flexible Funding – COVID-19

“Flexible Funding” means the provision of goods or payments of expenses which directly help a household to obtain or maintain permanent housing or meet essential household needs to prevent the loss of housing and/or assist homeless tribal families to obtain and remain in stable housing. Flexible funding is provided according to the Tribal family’s services plan to pay for cost not provided under typical low-income housing programs.

Flexible Funding include and are not limited to the following:

- Childcare cost
- Medical/Dental costs (medicine, glasses, medical equipment, etc.) provided these expenses are not covered through our Tribal Health Department.
- Transportation costs (car repair, car maintenance, gas, bus passes, etc.)
- Work clothes, supplies, or professional presentation needs
- Legal costs – associated with COVID-19
- Vehicle licensing (tabs, tickets, reinstatements, etc.)
- School uniforms or supplies
- Necessary furniture.
- Rental Assistance

Flexible Funding payments must be paid directly to a third party on behalf of the household and noted in a household’s service plan.

Retailer or Merchant gift cards, vouchers or certificates that can be exchanged for cash or that allow the recipient to purchase alcohol or tobacco products are not eligible expenses.

Tenant Based Rental Assistance:

1. Helps income eligible tribal Citizens whose needs cannot be met through the existing housing programs.
2. The assistance amount provided by the Tribal Housing Department to a family for rental assistance is based upon the fair market rent for the unit (the size of unit the family is eligible to rent according to the occupancy standard)
3. Native Families that become incapacitated, ill, hospitalized, and unable to work because of COVID-19 and thus are unable to pay their rent, they may request emergency rental assistance to cover the entire amount of their monthly rent.

In situations where verification cannot be obtained, Families can provide Tribal Housing with a Self-Declaration until such time as documented verification can be obtained.

Tribal housing will approve up to ninety (90) days of emergency assistance.

If an individual requires emergency assistance beyond the initial ninety (90) days, Tribal Housing can request approval from the Tribal Council to extend emergency assistance beyond the ninety (90) days.

Unless otherwise mentioned, all Housing Policies under 13.200 (Rental Assistance) will apply.

Right to Appeal

1. If a citizen is denied assistance under this Program based on the decision that they do not meet the criteria set forth in Section 2 of this policy, they have the right to appeal the denial as provided in the Samish Indian Nation’s Tenant Based Rental Assistance Policy §13.007.

