



**Metropolitan Denver Homeless
Initiative**

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**MDHI Housing Stability Flexible
Fund 2022 - Policies and
Procedures**

Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) works with organizations utilizing OneHome, HMIS, or who are a CoC member to provide households who are experiencing a housing crisis in the seven-county Metro Denver region with move-in, prevention, or landlord mitigation assistance. MDHI Flex Fund is designed to remove financial barriers that prevent households from obtaining or remaining in permanent housing. This document outlines MDHI's Flex Fund's policies and procedures. More information on the MDHI Flex Fund program can be found on our webpage at <https://www.mdhi.org/flex-fund>.

I. Accessing Flex Fund Assistance

- a. Before submitting a request to Flex Fund, the provider should attempt to obtain assistance from all other resources in the community. Flex Fund will ask the provider which resources have been attempted in the application. Not attempting other resources may result in denial.
- b. Flex Fund is used when households would continue to experience homelessness or become literally homeless if *but for* this one-time financial assistance.
- c. To submit to Flex Fund on behalf of eligible households, organizations or providers must:
 - i. Be a member of the Metro Denver Continuum of Care (CoC).
 1. For more information on CoC membership and how to apply please visit, <https://www.mdhi.org/coc>.
 - ii. Be utilizing the OneHome system
 - iii. *-or-* be utilizing HMIS
- d. Providers can review the latest Policies & Procedures for the MDHI Flex Fund on the website and are encouraged to do so prior to submitting their application to ensure the request meets eligibility and they are able to obtain the necessary supporting documentation.

- e. The link to the Flex Fund application is posted on our website:
<https://www.mdhi.org/flex-fund>
- f. Funding fluctuates, and even when all eligibility criteria are met, requests may not be approved. For inquiries and questions related to accessing and submitting Flex Fund requests, e-mail flexfund@mdhi.org.

II. Eligible Participants

- a. Households are eligible to receive Flex Fund assistance one time every 12 months.
- b. Flex Fund cannot assist with transitional housing or halfway house payments.
- c. Individuals and families experiencing a housing crisis in the seven-county Metro Denver region (Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson) are eligible to apply for Flex Fund assistance.
- d. Households must be literally homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless.
 - i. *Literal homelessness is defined as an individual or family who is residing in an emergency shelter, transitional housing, or place not meant for human habitation such as a bus stop, camping, or vehicle.*
 - ii. *At-risk:*
 - 1. <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/AtRiskofHomelessnessDefinitionCriteria.pdf>
- e. Households must have a lease that is signed or ready to be signed. Households must be fully approved for housing and the unit should be ready for move-in (passed inspection) before submitting to Flex Fund.
 - i. *See **Section IV** for documentation guidelines on leases and letters of approval from landlord/property owners.*
- f. If a household is at-risk of homelessness, they must have written documentation from their current landlord/property owner stating that they need to vacate due to the non-payment of rent or have documentation of the mitigation costs/fees.
 - i. *See **Section IV** for documentation guidelines.*
- g. Eligible households must be able to maintain housing after receiving one-time financial assistance from the Flex Fund program.
 - i. *If a household has no source of income, the provider may be asked for a case management or Housing Stability Plan explanation to understand how future payments will be made to maintain housing.*

III. Eligible Costs

- a. The Flex Fund program can be used for one-time move-in costs, prevention and rental assistance, or landlord mitigation costs.
- b. Flex Fund can assist with up to \$3,000 per household, but only if that amount is available and needed. Providers are only able to request assistance for one type of eligible cost per submission.
 - i. *See **Section V** for total assistance amounts specific to agency-owned housing and other homeless assistance programs.*
- c. The following are the current eligible Flex Fund costs:
 - i. Landlord Mitigation Assistance:
 - 1. Reimbursement to landlord/property owners for damages, repairs, or vacancy payments

2. Rental Arrears – past unit:
 - a. Rental arrears in collections will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will only be approved when a household’s application for affordable housing, public housing, a housing choice voucher, or a tax-credit unit are being denied.
 - b. Arrears owed must be their only reason for denial.
- ii. Move-in Assistance:
 1. Security Deposit and/or First month’s rent
 2. One-time move-in costs (hiring a moving company)
 3. Pet Deposits or one-time pet fees
 4. Relocation to another community when there is a confirmed housing opportunity
 - a. Will only reimburse agencies for travel tickets
 - i. Agencies must obtain prior approval for reimbursement, or it is not guaranteed
- iii. Prevention Assistance:
 1. Rental Arrears – current unit
 - a. Rental assistance with past due rent
 - b. No forward paying
 2. Utility Assistance
 - a. Deposits and arrears assistance is available when impacting a household’s ability to establish a new service or if they have received a disconnect notice.
 - b. Providers will be asked to attempt LEAP or EOC first.
 3. Hotel and Motel Assistance – forward paying, no back pay
 - a. Must be directly related to housing need (approved for unit and move-in date scheduled).
 - b. Will not pay more than 30 days max, but no more than \$3,000 total.
 - c. If the balance due exceeds \$3,000, we will need to deny.
 - d. Only able to reimburse agencies for hotel and motel assistance payments.
 - e. Providers must receive prior approval before requesting reimbursements.
 - f. Assistance is dependent on the household's situation, and the Flex Fund programs available funding.
 4. Storage unit assistance
 - a. Must be directly related to housing need (approved for unit and move-in date scheduled).
 - b. Will not pay more than 30 days max, but no more than \$3,000 total.
 - c. Only able to reimburse agencies for storage unit assistance payments.

- d. Providers must receive prior approval before requesting reimbursements.
- e. Assistance is dependent on the household's situation, and the Flex Fund programs available funding.
- iv. Other Financial Barriers to Permanent Housing
 - 1. If the household needs Flex Fund financial assistance for something that is not listed as an eligible cost, it must be approved by MDHI before submitting a request form. Please e-mail flexfund@mdhi.org for preapproval.

IV. Backup Documentation:

- a. MDHI relies on our community providers to collect and send all backup documentation for assistance. MDHI does not have the capacity to collect the required paperwork, communicate with the vendor (landlord, moving company, utility company, etc.), and/or communicate with people seeking assistance.
- b. All vendors (property owners, moving companies) must provide an accurate and complete W-9 and provide documentation verifying the amounts owed by the household seeking assistance that are dated within the last 30 days.
- c. Once backup documentation is collected, providers must e-mail documents to flexfund@mdhi.org as soon as possible.
- d. Documentation must be emailed as a PDF in order to adhere to MDHI's payment request process through our third-party vendor.
- e. Emails must be sent encrypted whenever possible.
- f. The following are potential examples of backup documentation to collect and submit with a Flex Fund request:
 - i. Landlord Mitigation Documentation:
 - 1. Reimbursement to landlords for damages or repairs
 - a. Copy of signed residential lease (if applicable)
 - b. Invoice including an itemized list of damages and the cost of repairs
 - c. Move-out Checklist (if applicable)
 - d. Copy of landlord/property managers complete W-9.
 - 2. Vacancy Payments
 - a. Promissory note from the landlord/property manager stating that they will continue to rent to participants if a vacancy payment is provided (must be submitted by landlord/property owner)
 - b. Copy of landlord/property managers W-9
 - 3. Rental Arrears – past unit
 - a. Denial notice from a PHA or HCV, tax credit unit, or other subsidy because of rental arrears owed to previous property owners *only*
 - b. If the arrears are with the landlord:
 - i. Copy of signed residential lease (if applicable)

- ii. Written notice, or ledger, or invoice of rental arrears from the landlord/property owner that includes the participant's name
 - iii. Copy of landlord/property owners W-9
 - c. If the arrears are with a collection agency:
 - i. Account balance or invoice from a collection agency
 - ii. Copy of the collection agency's W-9
 - ii. Move-in Assistance Documentation:
 - 1. Security Deposits
 - a. Copy of signed lease stating security deposit amount-or-
 - b. If signed lease is not available, provider must follow up with signed lease when available and MDHI may accept a letter from landlord/property owner stating the household is approved for move-in and includes:
 - i. Prospective residential address
 - ii. Amount of deposit
 - iii. Tenant's name
 - c. Copy of landlord/property owner's W-9
 - 2. First month's rent
 - a. Copy of signed lease stating rental amount -or-
 - b. If signed lease is not available, provider must follow up with signed lease when available and MDHI may accept a letter from landlord/property owner stating the household is approved for move-in and includes:
 - i. Prospective residential address
 - ii. Rental amount
 - iii. Tenant's name
 - c. Copy of landlord/property owner's W-9
 - 3. One-time move-in costs (hiring a moving company)
 - a. Quote or invoice from a moving company or truck rental to be approved by MDHI
 - b. Other invoices related to the move-in costs
 - c. Copy of the moving company or truck rental company's W-9
 - 4. Pet Deposits or one-time pet fees
 - a. Copy of signed residential lease including the pet fee amount; - or-
 - b. If signed lease is not available, provider must follow up with signed lease when available and MDHI may accept a letter from landlord/property owner stating the household is approved for move-in and includes:
 - i. Prospective residential address
 - ii. Amount of pet deposit or fee
 - iii. Tenant's name
 - c. Copy of landlord/property owner's W-9

5. Relocation to another community when there is a confirmed housing opportunity
 - a. Travel ticket (reimbursement only)
 - i. Receipt of purchase
 - ii. Agency's accurate and complete W9
 - iii. Explanation of the relocation need
 - b. Permanent housing outside of Denver Metro Area
 - i. Copy of signed lease stating rental amount -or-
 - ii. If signed lease is not available, provider must follow up with signed lease when available and MDHI may accept a letter from landlord/property owner stating the household is approved for move-in and includes:
 1. Prospective residential address
 2. Rental amount
 3. Tenant's name
 - iii. Copy of landlord/property owner's W-9
- iii. Prevention Assistance Documentation:
 1. Rental Arrears – current unit
 - a. Copy of signed residential lease
 - b. An eviction notice/demand for compliance; -or-
 - c. Account ledger or recently written notice from the landlord/property owner stating:
 - i. Amount of rent owed
 - ii. The household is at-risk of losing their housing
 - d. Copy of landlord/property owner's W-9
 2. Utility Assistance – Arrears and Deposits
 - a. Utility bill in the participant's name that shows the amount of the utility deposit or total arrears
 - b. Copy of the utility company's W-9
 3. Hotel and Motel Assistance for up to 30 days max (no more than \$3000)
 - a. Invoice from hotel/motel, including participant name and amount owed
 - b. E-mail or letter from provider describing household's situation and progress towards housing stability
 - c. Copy of signed lease stating rental amount -or-
 - d. If signed lease is not available, provider must follow up with signed lease when available and MDHI may accept a letter from landlord/property owner stating the household is approved for move-in and includes:
 - i. Prospective residential address
 - ii. Tenant's name
 - iii. Move-in date
 - e. Copy of agency's W9
 4. Storage unit assistance for up to 30 days max (no more than \$3000)

- a. Invoice from storage company, including participant name and amount owed
- b. E-mail or letter from provider describing household's situation and progress towards housing stability
- c. Copy of signed lease stating rental amount -or-
- d. If signed lease is not available, provider must follow up with signed lease when available and MDHI may accept a letter from landlord/property owner stating the household is approved for move-in and includes:
 - i. Prospective residential address
 - ii. Tenant's name
 - iii. Move-in date
- e. Copy of the agency's W-9

V. Assisting Households in Agency-owned Housing and other Homeless Assistance Programs

- a. If households are residing in agency-owned housing, providers must follow these steps before accessing Flex Fund for assistance:
 - i. If the household is residing in agency-owned housing, assess if a payment plan is an option for the household.
 - ii. If the household is a current participant of a CoC/ESG or another type of Homeless Assistance Program, then MDHI or the person submitting the request should verify that the financial request cannot be covered by the program.
 - iii. When submitting backup documentation to Flex Fund, explain the household's stabilization plan to illustrate the household is connected to resources and that housing stability will be maintained if Flex Fund can provide one-time assistance.
- b. If the Flex Fund can assist, there is a specific limit of 50% of the total arrears owed, but no more than \$1,000 total.

VI. Requesting Assistance

- a. MDHI will not accept or approve a request submitted by a program participant/client. The household seeking assistance must be working with a partner organization to submit and process the request.
- b. MDHI will not accept or approve a request submitted by a landlord. The household seeking assistance must be working with a partner organization to submit and process the request.
- c. Providers are prohibited from submitting a request for the Flex Fund on behalf of a family member, friend, or colleague.
- d. The same individual provider cannot submit more than one request at a time and can only have one active Flex Fund request open at a time.
 - i. *Applications will automatically be denied, and you will need to re-apply once your previous application has been closed.*
- e. Providers can submit a request form by clicking on the application link found at <https://www.mdhi.org/flex-fund>.
- f. Make sure all the information on the form is completed and filled out correctly. If answers to questions are missing or incomplete, MDHI may ask for more information.

- g. Providers are encouraged to take advantage of the “Notes” section at the end of the application to expand on the household’s situation.
- h. Providers must email the supporting documentation for their application to flexfund@mdhi.org as soon as possible upon completing an application. Flex Fund will not reach out to providers directly to obtain supporting documents.
- i. Providers must submit all supporting documentation to complete the Flex Fund application within 10 business days.
 - i. *If backup documentation is not collected and sent within 10 business days of submitting a request to the Flex Fund, the form will have to be re-submitted, and MDHI can no longer guarantee assistance.*
 - ii. *See Section IV. for guidelines on required documents for different eligible costs.*

VII. Process of Approval and Communication

- a. MDHI Flex Fund will respond to e- mails within 1-3 business days, with the exception of Holidays where MDHI offices may be closed for an extended period.
- b. Providers submitting requests are also responsible for the communication follow-up. The provider who submits the request should be the only person communicating with MDHI about the application for assistance.
- c. If the Flex Fund does not receive correspondence from providers within 10 business days, the request form will have to be re- submitted, and MDHI can no longer guarantee assistance.
- d. MDHI attempts to ensure that the Flex Fund is available to all our CoC members, OneHome users, and HMIS users across the seven-county metro Denver Region by tracking the number of requests agencies submit to the Flex Fund per month that are approved and processed.
 - i. *Once an agency reaches seven (7) approved and processed requests in one month, the Flex Fund will notify the next submitter from that agency that their max number of processed requests for the month has been reached and other resources should be accessed.*
 - ii. *Flex Fund encourages providers to coordinate within agencies to ensure the most appropriate households receive assistance first.*
 - iii. *If funds are available, we may be able to consider additional requests but there are no guarantees.*
- e. Flex Fund does not have an appeal process as the decision is final.

VIII. Payments and Reimbursements

- a. Payments will be made on behalf of the participant and issued to third-party vendors such as a utility company, landlord/property owner, hotel/motel, moving company, etc. MDHI cannot directly reimburse a participant.
- b. Unless otherwise determined by the referral source and MDHI, payments will be mailed to the vendor’s address indicated on the W-9 if a mailed check is the preferred method of payment.
- c. MDHI can reimburse a referring agency if the vendor is not willing to wait for the check to be processed.

- i. If an agency is seeking reimbursement, they must provide MDHI with a current copy of their agency's W-9 and proof of the payment transaction (copies of checks, check requests, credit card statement, etc.) within five (5) business days.
- ii. Agencies that do not get prior approval from MDHI will not be reimbursed. All service providers must fill out a request form and receive approval before issuing a payment and expecting reimbursement.
- d. MDHI is not responsible for late fees accrued if our payment is late. It is the providers responsibility to maintain communication with the landlord on payment.
- e. If a household receives additional assistance elsewhere and is no longer in need of MDHI Flex Fund's assistance, payment must be reimbursed to MDHI Flex Fund.

IX. Payment Options

- a. ACH
 - i. This will be a direct deposit and would be the quickest option.
 - ii. The landlord can provide bank account information by completing MDHI's ACH form -or-
 - iii. MDHI can send an email through our check processor, bill.com, to prompt them to input their bank information. MDHI does not see their banking information. This is a time sensitive email and must be completed in 48 hours or the payment will automatically revert to a mailed check.
 - iv. The provider must also ask the landlord if they already have an account set up in bill.com.
- b. Mailed check
 - i. Regular mail defaulted to address from W9

X. Homeless Management Information System (HMIS):

- a. Agencies who have access to Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) and submit a Flex Fund request are required to create or update the head of the household and all its members' client profiles in HMIS. Agencies should adhere to the policies and procedures described in Colorado HMIS Statewide Policies and Procedures.
- b. MDHI staff will enter a Flex Fund service indicating the amount and type of assistance that the household has received along with other household information from the Flex Fund application
- c. If agencies do not have access or use HMIS, the person submitting the Flex Fund application is required to follow the steps below before the household's information can be shared in HMIS:
 - i. Obtain consent from the household seeking assistance to have their information shared in HMIS. Consent can be either verbal or written.
 - 1. Written consent is preferred. Indicate on the application the type of consent that was obtained from the household seeking assistance.
 - 2. The Release of Information (ROI) is linked in the application, and if written consent is possible, the ROI should be uploaded into HMIS.
 - 3. If verbal consent is obtained, the ROI should be read aloud to the household seeking assistance.
- d. If a household refuses to have their information shared in HMIS, MDHI will enter the information to track the service and mark the household as "Private" in the system.