



Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency

SERVING BERRIEN, CASS, AND VAN BUREN COUNTIES

Helping People. Changing Lives.



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For Immediate Release

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COVID Emergency Rental Assistance Program application period to end June 30, 2022

Michigan renters, landlords encouraged to apply as soon as possible ahead of deadline

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LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) has announced that it will soon have enough applications through the COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) program to encumber all funds available. Applications for CERA [through the online portal](#) will stop being accepted as of Thursday, June 30, 2022, at 9:00pm. Michiganders with rent arrears should apply immediately for potential consideration. It is likely that more applications will be received than funds available. Applications submitted before the deadline will continue to be processed until all the available funds are utilized.

The CERA program proved to be incredibly helpful for those facing economic hardship and potential eviction due to pandemic-related causes. Since the program's introduction in March 2021:

- Statewide, over 250,000 applications were received for assistance, with over 130,000 being approved.
- To-date over \$750 million has been disbursed in assistance
- Over 142,000 Michiganders have been helped by this assistance, with an average of about \$5,600 per household
- In Van Buren County, over 1,151 unduplicated individuals have been received rent and/or utility assistance and over \$2,668,000 disbursed

"MSHDA and SMCAA have put forth tremendous effort to make sure the CERA program was accessible for thousands of Michiganders" said Kelly Rose, MSHDA's chief housing solutions officer. "Thanks to federal funding, we have been able to facilitate much-needed peace of mind to residents, helping them catch up on their rent and utility costs while also ensuring landlords can recoup owed rent. Though that funding will be fully expended later this year, MSHDA and SMCAA remain committed to helping residents with housing needs where possible."

Once the CERA portal closes on June 30, residents who have not applied and are facing eviction should reach out to Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency at 269-925-9077. Those seeking legal services can reach out to [Michigan Legal Help](#) for potentially free legal representation. MSHDA is also evaluating other eviction prevention funding options like HOME-ARP and the Housing and Community Development Fund.



Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency (SMCAA) is dedicated to empowering diverse people in need and supporting their journey towards economic security.





Funding for the COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) program came from the federal coronavirus aid package passed in December 2020 and the American Rescue Plan Act, which allocated \$1.1 billion to the State of Michigan to be used directly on rental and utility assistance for individuals and families financially impacted by the pandemic. The response to the program has been overwhelming as many in need have sought to use CERA to secure housing stability. In fact, the program may end up with more applications than funds available, but MSHDA is focused on processing as many applications as possible received by the June 30, 2022, cutoff date.

For more information on CERA, visit <https://www.michigan.gov/mshda/rental/cera>.

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About Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency

Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency (SMCAA) is a private, non-profit Community Action Agency - part of a state and national network. There are 28 Community Action agencies in Michigan and nearly 1,000 across the country. The agency started servicing Van Buren County in 1982. Four years later the agency incorporated and began providing human services to both Cass and Van Buren Counties. In 1992, the service delivery area officially added Berrien County, and created the Southwest Michigan Community Action Agency.

Over the past 40 years, SMCAA has continued the journey spearheaded by President Johnson by administering federal, state, and local contracts developed to respond to the needs of individuals and families residing in the tri-county area. Today, SMCAA brings together federal and state grant funds and donated dollars from local, private, and public sources. Our core funding is the U.S. Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), and we must fulfill a number of Organizational Standards in order to meet funding requirements. This funding and additional grants or donations are directed into a number of core and special programs and services that aid the low income, vulnerable, and otherwise disadvantaged individuals and households residing in Southwest Michigan.

SMCAA is dedicated to empowering diverse people in need and supporting their journey towards economic security. Our Vision is to be a beacon of support in a strong, thriving community by helping people and changing lives. In order to accomplish our mission and reach our vision, SMCAA establishes, coordinates, and carries out programs to promote the health, education, and welfare of low-income individuals and families across the tri-county area. Learn more about SMCAA at www.smcaa.com.

About MSHDA

The [Michigan State Housing Development Authority](#) (MSHDA), established in 1966, provides financial and technical assistance through public and private partnerships to create and preserve safe and decent affordable housing, engage in community economic development activities, develop vibrant cities, towns and villages, and address homeless issues.



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