



Request for Applications (RFA) Housing Stability Services (HSS) for the Homeless Emergency Rental Assistance (HERA) Program

Responses are due no later than Friday, January 19, 2024 by 12:00 noon CST.

Submit completed PDF application electronically to HERAinfo@ihda.org.

Please contact IHDA Grant Management Team at HERAinfo@ihda.org with any questions about this RFA.





Request for Application (RFA) Housing Stability Services (HSS) for the Homeless Emergency Rental Assistance (HERA) Program

HOMELESS EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE (HERA) PROGRAM

The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), with the assistance of the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA), plans to launch the Homeless Emergency Rental Assistance Program (HERA) to reduce homelessness by providing eligible homeless households, on a first-come first serve basis, with three months of emergency rental assistance with the possibility of renewal for another three months, for a maximum of six months rental assistance, up to \$15,000 per household.

Households work with a Homeless Services Community Based Organization (CBO) to locate a unit to rent and support move-ins. Households are required to complete a grant application to receive funding; full housing provider participation and completion of the grant application is strongly encouraged. Rental payments will be disbursed in increments of three consecutive months. Recertification by the housing provider and the household will be required prior to the renewal payout. If a housing provider is non-responsive to multiple outreach attempts to complete the renewal, assistance will be provided directly to the household.

Applicants who score low on the Continuum of Care (CoC) coordinated entry prioritization tool will be referred to the program. Prioritization tools are used to match households with the most appropriate housing resources, such as Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid ReHousing. As CoCs in Illinois are reaching toward a functional zero, households who score lower on the prioritization tool need to be included in housing access pathways. The HERA program will provide that access.

- Approximately 1,200 households are anticipated to receive assistance on a first-come, first-serve basis.
- Eligibility is not a guarantee of funding.

FUNDING SOURCE FOR THE HOMELESS EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND HSS GRANTS

The HERA program was established under Section 3201 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (“ARPA”) and authorizes the United States Department of the Treasury (“Treasury”) to make payments to certain recipients, including the State of Illinois (“State”), to be used to provide emergency rental assistance (“ERA2”). The purpose of the ERA2 is to provide grants for financial assistance to households for rent, utilities, and other housing expenses for low-income households that are at risk of homelessness and are experiencing unemployment or financial hardship. The ERA2 funds may be used for:

- (1) Financial assistance to eligible households (at least 90%); and
- (2) Housing stability services and administrative fees (not more than 10%).



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HOUSING CASE MANAGEMENT PARTNERS IN HERA PROGRAM

Continuum of Care (CoC):

- HERA Program Role:
 - Provides program coordination
 - Ensures program referrals do not exceed availability of funds
 - Provides referrals from CoC Coordinated Entry System and the MLV to the CBOs

- The CoC is the group organized to carry out the responsibilities of policy and planning to end homelessness for a defined geographic area. Responsibilities of a CoC include designating and operating the Homeless Management Information System; coordinating the implementation of a housing and service system that meets the needs of the individuals and families who experience homelessness; and designing and implementing the process associated with applying for CoC Program funds from HUD.

McKinney-Vento Liaisons (MVL):

- HERA Program Role: refers potentially eligible Households to the CoC to apply for HERA Program Funds
- MVLs work within public schools. MVLs ensure children and youth experiencing homelessness are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies. MVLs ensure children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness receive referrals to health care, dental, mental health, substance abuse, housing, and other appropriate services.

Homeless Services Community Based Organizations (CBOs):

- HERA Program Role
 - Supports household in finding and inspecting a unit to rent
 - Supports household in gathering documentation
 - Works with the housing provider and tenant to secure a lease
 - Supports purchase of bed, furniture, and home supplies (as needed)
 - Provides initial set of required documents to housing stability service (“HSS”) providers
 - Connects household to Housing Provider to complete rental assistance application
- CBOs provide case management and housing location services to PEH
- Partner organizations of the CoC

Housing Stability Service (HSS) Agencies:

- Responsible for assisting tenants in completing the initial online application & recertification
- Perform outreach to potential housing providers and provide program information throughout the State.

Housing Provider Requirements:

- Affirms that household is not receiving rental assistance from another ARPA rental assistance program for the same unit
- Certifies that the housing they will provide to serve as the primary residence for the HERA tenant is decent, safe and sanitary
- Agrees and certifies that the rent is affordable/will not exceed “Fair Market Rent” (as defined by ARPA)
- Agrees to comply with all applicable ARPA laws rules and regulations



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HERA BASICS

The HERA Program will provide up to three months of rental assistance (plus an optional one-time move-in fee capped at one month's rent) with the option of one three-month renewal, if eligible. Assistance will be in the form of a grant and must not exceed six total months of rental assistance, or up to \$15,000 per household.

- The HERA Program will assist households experiencing homelessness who may not qualify for permanent supportive housing or rapid re-housing.
- Each of the 19 CoCs that cover Illinois will receive a baseline allocation of HERA Program funds.
- A household cannot exceed 18 total months of assistance through federal ERA1- and ERA2-funded programs, including HERA.
- Households may be identified for the HERA program via their local Continuum of Care (CoC) Coordinated Entry lead, local Continuum of Care outreach providers and/or local school McKinney-Vento Liaisons (MVL).
- Households work with a Homeless Services Community Based Organization (CBO) to locate a unit to rent and support move-ins.
- Households are required to complete a grant application to receive funding; full housing provider participation and completion of the grant application is strongly encouraged. Households must work directly with an approved Housing Stability Service ("HSS") Agency to complete the electronic grant application on their behalf.
- Rental payments will be disbursed in increments of three consecutive months.
- Recertification by the housing provider and the household will be required prior to the renewal payout. If a housing provider is non-responsive to multiple outreach attempts to complete the renewal, assistance will be provided directly to the household. Households must work directly with an approved HSS Agency to complete the recertification application.
- General Tenant Eligibility Criteria:
 - Must be obligated to pay rent on a residential dwelling
 - One or more individuals within the household has qualified for unemployment benefits or experienced a loss of household income, incurred significant costs, experienced other financial hardship during or due, directly or indirectly, to the COVID-19 outbreak.
 - The household can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability.
 - The household is a low-income family (as such term is defined in section 3(b) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a(b)). See 47 Ill. Adm. Code 378.103.
 - Must be, at the time the application is initiated, a person experiencing homelessness (as defined below)
 - The unit will serve as their primary residence.



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HERA DURATION

For purposes of responding to this RFA, individual tenant and HSS agency grant applicants should assume that funding under the HERA may occur in a single round, multiple rounds, or via a rolling application process with awards that may be on a first-come, first-served basis, or based on a randomized selection process, or until funds are exhausted.

The HERA program is expected to begin April 1, 2024, and is approved to run through September 30, 2025. IHDA reserves the right to issue a supplement to this RFA at any time, including if additional funding becomes available, the federal expenditure timeline is extended, and/or IHDA determines that additional services may be needed from one or more HSS Providers.



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HOUSING STABILITY SERVICES

IHDA is issuing this RFA to obtain responses from qualified housing counseling agencies, non-profit organizations, and legal aid organizations to assist IHDA with the operation of HERA program by providing housing stability services as contemplated under ARPA. Subject to the approval of IHDA's Board of Directors, agencies selected for awards pursuant to this RFA process will assist IHDA, throughout the entire grant period, in operating HERA specifically by engaging in the following housing stability services:

1. HSS OUTREACH:
 - a) Disseminating information about HERA throughout the entire State of Illinois; and
 - b) In conjunction with the CBOs, engaging housing providers to consider their participation in the HERA program

2. HSS INTAKE:
 - a) Assisting Illinois households experiencing homelessness, preferably across the entire state of Illinois, including housing providers, with the initial HERA application process and optional recertification, virtually, over the phone, or in-person; Providing intentional outreach and intake assistance to housing providers of 2–4-unit buildings who may face technology and language barriers.

3. TECHNOLOGY: All organizations are also eligible to apply for grant for bolstering the organization's mobile and technology network in order to perform the services, i.e. the purchase of computer workstations, laptops, tablets, headsets.



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HERA HSS GRANT ELIGIBILITY & SCORING CRITERIA

Housing counseling agencies, non-profit organizations, and legal aid organizations are eligible to apply if they have experience with outreach, client intake, and information management procedures.

Organizations with prior experience with the following criteria will receive closer consideration:

1. Ability to work with the 19 CoCs and numerous CBOs that cover Illinois to support people experiencing homelessness transition from unstable living situations into affordable rental housing units
2. Ability to effectively assist applicants (tenants and/or housing providers) in gathering required documentation and funding request to an IHDA application portal, with minimal application edits and/or quick and efficient responses to requests for application edits/cures
3. Service area to include multiple Illinois counties
4. Ability to virtually assist applicants (tenants and/or housing providers) across the entire State of Illinois
5. Ability to assist tenants in languages other than English
6. Ability to assist applicants (tenants and/or housing providers) with no internet and/or limited technical skills in submitting their funding request to an IHDA application portal
7. Ability to conduct outreach and/or marketing methods that generate eligible housing providers to participate in HERA for the tenant applicants in the event that CBOs and/or CoCs need assistance reaching out to housing providers to participate in the HERA program.
8. Ability to quickly activate a readiness timeline if agency receives notification of HSS grant award
9. Ability to submit timely and accurate grant usage reporting, including monthly activity reports and bi-monthly (every other month) financial reimbursement and disbursement request reports
10. Ability to participate in regular and periodically scheduled meetings regarding program delivery planning and review, and calls with the IHDA program team and other HERA HSS Agencies



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MAXIMUM HERA HSS GRANT AWARDS

The maximum grant amounts to be awarded for the HERA HSS activities are set forth below. Grant approval documentation and orientation will contain details about the funding and reimbursement process. Approximately 1,200 households are anticipated to receive assistance on a first-come, first-serve basis. Eligibility is not a guarantee of funding.

The HERA HSS grant funds will be dispersed to approved HSS Agencies using the following two methods:

1. A “fee-for-service” method based on approved tenant applications, replacing Client Intake expense reimbursement, with HSS reporting to be verified with IHDA HERA applications processing platform (Unqork); and
2. An expense reimbursement process for Outreach and Computer Equipment & Technology Infrastructure costs, with documentation of expense incurred and proof of payment required for every item.

IHDA will not provide any up-front grant funds to HSS agencies.

Expenses ineligible for reimbursement include the following:

- Bonus pay
- Marketing Materials promoting only the agency; they must promote IHDA program(s)
- Marketing/Outreach Materials – no giveaways such as pens, stress balls, etc.
- Late fees
- General operations employee continuing education or training. Training for IHDA program-specific topics may be eligible.
- Special purpose capital equipment
- Operational expenditures (furnishings, renovations, motor vehicles, etc.)
- Indirect costs such as rent, utilities, employment search fees

NOTE: IHDA reserves the right to reallocate funding to other HSS HERA Sub-Grantees based on performance and in accordance with the grant agreement. In addition, IHDA reserves the right to issue a supplement to this RFA, at any time, to increase the maximum grant amounts, in the event additional funding becomes available, the federal expenditure timeline is extended, and/or IHDA determines that additional services may be needed from one or more HSS Sub-Grantees.

“Fee-for-Service” Payment Structure Details

HSS Agencies approved for a HERA grant will receive funding on a “fee-for-service” basis, based on the submission of a complete and error-free tenant and housing provider application with appropriate supporting documents attached, which is then **approved** by IDHA for funding to the tenant applicant’s housing provider for their rental unit.

- a). HERA HSS Agencies will be paid a rate of \$300 per completed and approved joint tenant and housing provider application file when supported with complete counselor checklists and case notes, as submitted to IHDA as part of agency grant reporting.
- b). HERA HSS Agencies will also be paid a rate of \$150 per completed and approved re-certification application file when supported with complete counselor checklists and case notes, as submitted to IHDA as part of agency grant reporting. Note: recertifications are optional, and are not guaranteed based on housing provider rental unit availability or tenant ability to



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continue in the unit.

An application file will be considered complete and approved when either the initial or recertification payment has been disbursed.

Expense Reimbursement Payment Structure Details

HSS INTAKE GRANT AWARD: **A projection of the total number of approved applications you can generate during this program will be required and will inform this portion of the grant request. Maximum grant award to support HERA intake is \$150,000.**

- 1.
2. **HSS OUTREACH GRANT AWARD:** the maximum grant award to support HERA outreach and marketing initiatives is \$10,000. (i.e., disseminating information statewide about HERA, engaging housing providers, and helping as required CBOs and/or CoCs to identify additional and alternative housing resources available for homeless tenant applicants).
3. **HSS COMPUTER EQUIPMENT GRANT AWARD:** the maximum grant award to purchase HSS Computer Equipment in support an agency's technology infrastructure required to deliver HERA program application services for clients is \$10,000 (i.e., the purchase of computer hardware, software, workstations, tablets, headsets, mobile hotspots, and related internet and phone services).

A detailed budget for all Outreach and Computer Equipment & Technology projected expenses for the program is required. IHDA understands that the budgets submitted will be good faith estimates, but responses to this RFA should be as detailed as possible.

Total Maximum Request Amount = \$170,000



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HERA HSS GRANT APPLICATION – FUNDING REQUEST

When submitting your response to this RFA, please include answers in all spaces provided below. Please note, other than the required financial audit and related materials, and the budget, all as discussed below, additional attachments will not be considered as part of the application and will not be reviewed by IHDA. There will be no exceptions to this provision. Only applications in fillable PDF format, not a scanned PDF format, will be accepted. Please ensure that all questions are answered fully before the you submit your response to this RFA. Applications that do not include the requested audit and budget materials will not be reviewed and will not be eligible for funding.

Please indicate below the amount of grant funds that you are applying for in connection with assisting IHDA in the operation and execution of the HERA program.

“Fee-for-Service” Request

Your request amount will be based on your projected number of completed and approved applications and recertifications that are submitted and approved by the HSS Agency.

Projected # of Applications Approved: x \$300/application = \$

Projected # of Recertification Applications Approved: x \$150/application = \$

Expense Reimbursement Payment Structure Details

Requested HSS Outreach Grant Amount: \$
(Maximum allowed = \$10,000)

Requested HSS Equipment Grant Amount: \$
(Maximum allowed = \$10,000)

Total Grant Amount Requested: \$

(Maximum allowed = \$170,000)



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QUESTIONS ABOUT THE HERA RFA APPLICATION BEFORE YOU SUBMIT?

Attend the HERA RFA Application Q&A Webinar on Wednesday, January 3, 2024 from 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Use the following link (Teams):

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 248 359 432 363

Passcode: 5Zfadv

[Download Teams](#) | [Join on the web](#)

Or call in (audio only)

[+1 872-267-6689,,817558919#](#) United States, Chicago

Phone Conference ID: 817 558 919#

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[Learn More](#) | [Meeting options](#)



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APPLICANT'S FINANCIAL AUDIT REPORT

Applicants must provide a copy of their most recent independent financial audit. If a management letter was issued in connection with the most recent independent financial audit, a copy of the management letter and any required management response/corrective action plan must also be submitted with your response to the RFA. The Management Response and/or Corrective Action Plan **MUST** be signed by an Executive Director, Chief Executive Officer, or chief executive of the applicant. IHDA reserves the right to use lack of corrective action or lack of response to findings in assessing an applicant's eligibility for funding.

Please note that the Treasury funding supporting the HERA HSS grant has a CFDA# 21.023. Any entity who did not have an independent financial audit conducted, and is therefore unable to provide one with their response, should provide a letter signed by the Executive Director, Chief Executive Officer, or chief executive of the applicant that explains why an independent financial audit has not historically been obtained, and what type of audit process, or other oversight method, has been put in place in lieu of an independent financial audit. To the extent permitted by applicable law, the Authority reserves the right to deem such an entity generally eligible for funding at the Authority's sole discretion. If prohibited by applicable law, the entity will be deemed ineligible for funding.

REPORTING AND HSS COMMUNICATIONS

To ensure that IHDA is able to fulfill its reporting requirements to IDHS and Treasury, HERA HSS agencies will be required to provide detailed reports to IHDA.

Approved HSS agencies will be required to report HSS activity monthly and to report expenses incurred, with supporting documentation, every other month to be reimbursed for eligible costs up to the approved grant amount. IHDA will provide reporting templates.

Approved HSS agencies will also be required to participate in regular virtual meetings (weekly or within other periodic timeframes) with other participating HSS agencies.

Approved HSS agencies are required to use a separate bank account to receive reimbursement direct deposits for each grant program. If the separate bank account (or sub-account) is not actively used for another program, then it may be used for HERA HSS funds.

IMPORTANT: Applications that do not include the requested audit, or a letter describing the oversight method that was put in place in lieu of an independent financial audit, then the application is NOT eligible for review.



**Request for Application (RFA)
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HERA HSS APPLICATION

Agency Name

Main Office Street Address, Line 1

Street Address, Line 2

City

State

Zip Code

Website

Primary Contact Name

Title

Telephone Number

E-mail Address

Secondary Contact Name

Title

Telephone Number

E-mail Address

How many staff do you anticipate dedicating to provide HSS for HERA?

Click here: [Application Contact Link](#) — to submit contact information for all your organization key RFA, program, and reporting team members.



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- 1. Geographies to be covered by this grant – list the county/counties you intend to service if awarded grant funds. Also, please provide each zip code that you intend to service. Please also specifically name any particular target areas, neighborhoods, or community areas you anticipate serving, if applicable.**

Enter response here



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2. Describe the demographic makeup of the clients that the Applicant serves.

Enter response here

3. Describe all of the services that the Applicant currently offers.

Enter response here

4. How many clients did the Applicant serve across all programs for calendar year 2023?

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5. Describe the Applicant's previous experience with COVID-19 related assistance programs. We are particularly interested in your experience with rental assistance, homeless assistance, and IHDA HSS grant partnerships:
- List all programs and your involvement and service delivery, broken down by Illinois Rental Payment Programs, Court-Based Rental Assistance Program, Homeowner Assistance Fund program, Asylum Seekers Emergency Rental Assistance Program, or other coronavirus relief fund programs.
 - Include an estimate of how many clients were assisted per program. Your estimates should include those clients reported in the application portal (community code entry), plus those that were not officially reported in the portal but were assisted through your agency.
 - Please share lessons learned and best practices developed through your experience with these programs.

Enter response here



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6. Describe your ability to submit timely and accurate grant reporting for previous IHDA HSS grants, and to regularly attend scheduled HSS program delivery planning and review calls. Did you exhaust all your previous/current grant funds awarded? If no, what percentage of your grant award was not used?

Enter response here



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- 7. Describe how the Applicant will assist clients with the HERA application portal, remotely or otherwise, if the tenant applicant does not have internet access and/or has limited technical skills.**

Enter response here



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- 8. There may be certain municipalities or counties running separate rental assistance programs using funds received under the ARPA. Describe how the HSS agency will communicate and coordinate with these jurisdictions to avoid duplication of services, and how to manage referrals.**

Enter response here

- 9. If you are currently serving clients regionally only, are you interested and able to expand your service area to virtually assist clients (tenants and/or housing providers) across the entire state of Illinois? Describe your ability to operationalize this expansion.**

Enter response here



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10. Please mark/check all the HSS functions that the Applicant is able to perform as of the date of this application.

- a. Has capacity to conduct virtual/remote client intake
- b. Has capacity to conduct telephone client intake
- c. Has capacity to conduct in-person client intake
- d. Has a client relationship management system in use (CRM)
- e. Has capacity to track and report data on client level, and in aggregate
- f. Has capacity to print and copy documents
- g. Has capacity to scan and e-mail documents
- h. Has capacity to mail or overnight documents

- i. Has capacity to serve clients, verbally, in the following languages (check all applicable):
English Spanish Polish Mandarin Cantonese
Tagalog Arabic Urdu Korean Gujarati
Hindi Russian German French Other _____

- j. Has capacity to serve clients, in writing, in the following languages (check all applicable):
English Spanish Polish Mandarin Cantonese
Tagalog Arabic Urdu Korean Gujarati
Hindi Russian German French Other _____

If you are unable to provide one or more of the above- listed functions, please indicate why in the space below:

Enter response here



Request for Application (RFA) Housing Stability Services (HSS) for the Homeless Emergency Rental Assistance (HERA) Program

Describe your current marketing and outreach services and capabilities for your existing programs, including any experience with conducting outreach or marketing for other IHDA HSS grant programs. Discuss methods and outcomes. Provide a detailed description of how you plan to conduct HSS outreach for the HERA program (i.e. flyers to food banks, churches, shelters. More outreach may be required to reach housing providers to participate).

Enter response here



**Request for Application (RFA)
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11. **Describe your current client intake process for your existing programs. Provide a detailed description of how you plan to conduct HSS client intake for HERA tenants.**

Enter response here



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12. Enter “Yes” if your most recent independent Financial Audit is included with your emailed RFA submission:

IMPORTANT: Applications that do not include the requested audit, or a letter describing the oversight method that was put in place in lieu of an independent financial audit, are NOT eligible for review.

13. In the space provided below, please describe your HERA HSS action plan, infrastructure, and organizational readiness strategy, and anything else you would like IHDA to know about your capacity to execute your grant award in connection with your response to this RFA. In describing your HERA HSS action plan and readiness strategy, include a response in detail for the items below.

- a) Readiness timeline – including staffing levels and cash flow availability for your initial program expense outlays
- b) Strategy for managing HERA volume on top of existing work (including call volume, virtual meeting volume, and, if applicable, in-person meetings)

Enter response here



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Program (HERA)**

14. In the space provided below, please describe your HERA HSS action plan, infrastructure, and organizational readiness strategy, and anything else you would like IHDA to know about your capacity to execute your grant award in connection with your response to this RFA. In describing your HERA HSS action plan and readiness strategy, include a response in detail for all of the items below.

- a) Strategy for managing client intake for all potential clients
- b) Strategy for assisting tenants with unresponsive housing providers
- c) Strategy for post-application assistance

Enter response here



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15. Describe your experience and expertise working with clients that are homeless and in need of housing services support. Describe your experience and expertise providing housing services, legal aid, or partnering with CoCs and CBOs, to assist clients with housing services.

Enter response here



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STANDARD REQUIREMENTS AND CERTIFICATIONS

Each entity selected for a HERA HSS grant will be required to comply with the following certifications and requirements as well as any additional certifications or requirements required by the ARPA, and any documents required by IHDA:

1. Applicant certifies that all statements herein are true, accurate, and complete;
2. Applicant is an eligible recipient of the HERA based on requirements per the application;
3. Applicant is authorized to do business and is in good standing in the State of Illinois;
4. Agency offices and services provided will be accessible to people with disabilities;
5. Applicant will not permit any discrimination based on gender, race, religion, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, or physical, mental, emotional, or learning disability in connection with its participation in HERA;
6. Applicant will ensure expenditures of funding are for eligible uses under HERA;
7. Applicant will maintain records in connection with administration of HERA for five years after the date of termination of the Funding Agreement;
8. Applicant will comply with the terms and conditions of HERA and additional local, state, and federal laws, rules and regulations; including without limitation, compliance with the Illinois Grant Accountability and Transparency Act;
9. Applicant will comply with monitoring and evaluation of HERA in accordance with the Funding Agreement; and
10. Neither the applicant, nor its affiliates or related entities, are delinquent in the payment of any debt to the State of Illinois (or if delinquent, has entered into a deferred payment plan to pay any debt).

On behalf of _____, I certify that the information contained herein accurately reflects my organization’s commitment and ability to participate fully in the HERA.

Name

Title

Date

DIGITAL Signature of Authorized Official