

**DATE:** June 14, 2021

**PROCEDURAL MEMORANDUM #001-21**

**SUBJECT:** Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) Categorical Income Eligibility Determination

**TO:** County ERAP Providers

**FROM:** Cathy Buhrig  
Director  
Bureau of Policy

**PURPOSE**

To inform county ERAP providers of the requirements to establish categorical income eligibility for applicant households.

**BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The United States Treasury published guidance in the Frequently Asked Questions dated May 7, 2021, pertaining to the use of categorical eligibility to document and verify income. If an applicant's household income has been verified to be at or below 80 percent of the area median income for ERA1, or if an applicant's household has been verified as a low-income family as defined in Section 3(b) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a(b)) for ERA2, in connection with another local, state, or federal government assistance program, grantees are permitted to rely on a determination letter from the government agency that verified the applicant's household income or status as a low-income family, provided that the determination for such program was made on or after January 1, 2020. Given the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, grantees may be flexible as to the particular form of documentation they require, including by permitting photocopies or digital photographs of documents, e-mails, or attestations from employers, landlords, caseworkers, or others with knowledge of the household's circumstances.

Based on this guidance, the Department of Human Services (DHS) has determined that a household may submit and the ERAP agency shall accept as income verification current eligibility determination notices for the following DHS programs with a determination date of January 01, 2020 or later: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid or Medical Assistance (MA) or Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

DHS and County Assistance Offices are unable to accommodate extensive ERAP agency requests for eligibility determination letters.

ERAP agencies may leverage use of “Yes” results from the COMPASS Benefit Search page to establish categorical income eligibility provided that the applicant has signed an authorization for release of information. A “Yes” indicator for benefits is sufficient verification that DHS has established income eligibility at an income limit below the 80 percent area median income after January 1, 2020.

ERAP agencies may log into COMPASS as a Service Provider to access the Benefits Search Page and request a benefit look up. Users can perform a search for up to five individuals per search. Use the “Reset” button to perform another search for up to five persons as needed. Please remember to log out after completing searches. (See attached COMPASS instructions for Benefit Search.)

### **NEXT STEPS**

1. Share and review this Procedural Memo with appropriate staff.
2. Review the attached COMPASS Benefit Search Instructions.
3. Direct questions regarding this Procedural Memo to [RA-PWERAPOIM@pa.gov](mailto:RA-PWERAPOIM@pa.gov).
4. This Procedural Memo is in effect until further notice.

### **ATTACHMENT**

ERAP Benefit Search Instructions

## ERAP Benefit Search Instructions

1. From the COMPASS home page select login from the upper right-hand corner.

PA pennsylvania

PA STATE AGENCIES PA ONLINE SERVICES

**COMPASS**  
CLICK. APPLY. BENEFIT.

WHAT WE OFFER HELPFUL LINKS ABOUT CONTACT US **LOGIN / REGISTER**

**Economic Impact Payments**  
The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is delivering a third round of Economic Impact Payments. You may receive your payment via direct deposit, check, or debit card. You can check on the status of your p... [Read more](#)

Language: [En Español](#) | [More](#)

### Welcome to COMPASS

The fast and easy way to access benefits - anytime and anywhere

COMPASS is an online tool for Pennsylvanians to apply for many health and human service programs and manage benefit information. Click on the Apply Now button below to begin.

[APPLY NOW](#) [DO I QUALIFY?](#)

#### Renew Your Benefits

Log in to your My COMPASS Account to renew your benefits. If you do not have a My COMPASS Account, click on the link below.

[Renew Now](#)

#### Finish Your Application

Log in to your My COMPASS Account to finish an application you stopped and saved. If you do not have a My COMPASS Account, click on the link below.

[Continue](#)

#### Free Summer Meals for Children

The Summer Food Service Program offers free, nutritious meals to children 18 years and younger during the summer when school is not in session. Program locations open and close throughout the summer based on community need. There is NO enrollment and NO cost to participate.

[Learn More](#)

#### Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Start your application.

[Get Started](#)

### Get the myCOMPASS PA App Today!

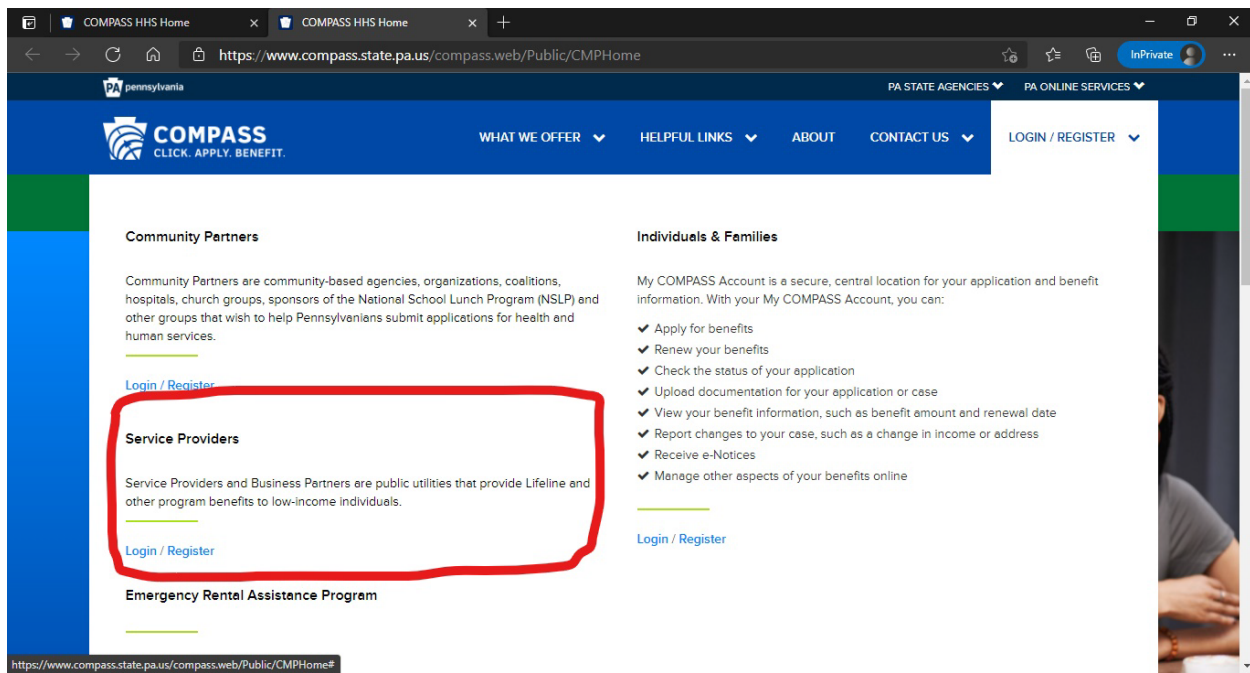
Access your benefits from anywhere, at any time. Review what benefits you receive, check the status of submitted applications, upload documents, submit your Semi-Annual Reporting (SAR), and report changes directly from your phone.

Your Benefits, Made Easier

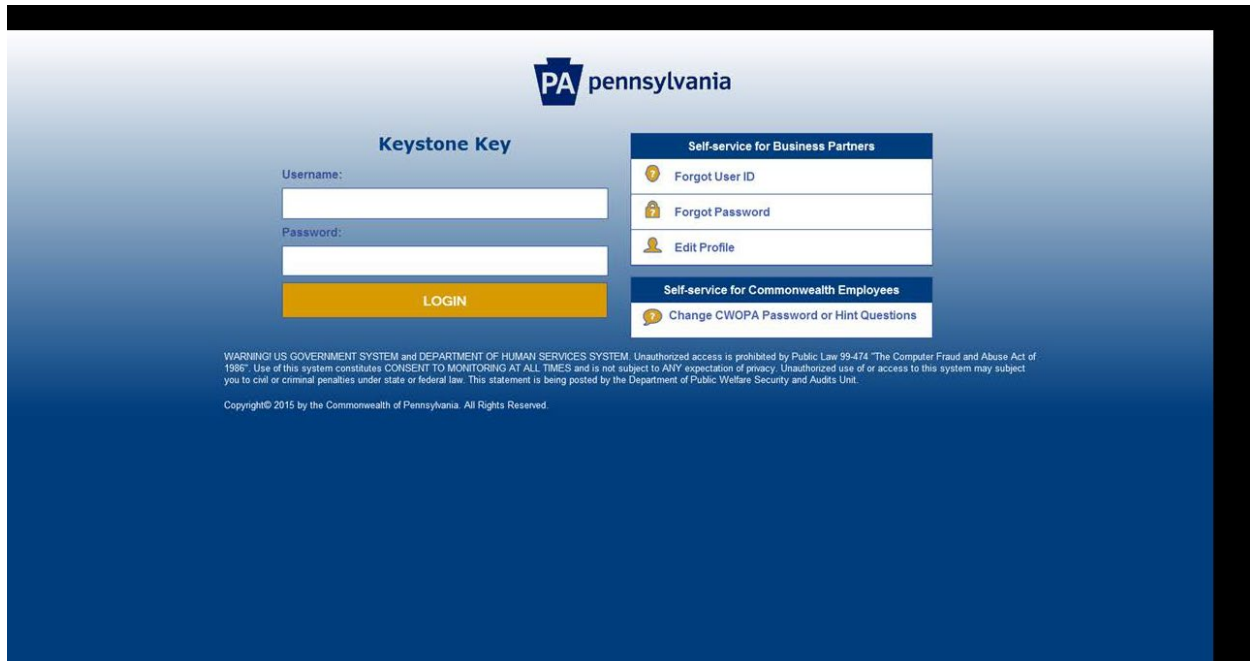
[Download on the App Store](#) [GET IT ON Google Play](#)

Browser Compatibility | Accessibility | Privacy Policy | HIPAA Notice of Privacy Practices | Notice of Non-Discrimination

## 2. Select the Service Provider Login.



## 3. Enter b-user login credentials.



#### 4. Perform Benefit Search

Enter up to five individuals per search. Use the “Reset” button to perform another search for up to five persons as needed. Please remember to log out after completing searches.

SSN Search

Individual 1

First Name:

Enter First Name

Middle Initial:

Enter Middle Initial

Last Name:

Enter Last Name

Date of Birth:

Enter Date of Birth

Last 4 digits of SSN:

Enter last 4 digits of SSN

Individual 2

First Name:

Enter First Name

Middle Initial:

Enter Middle Initial

Last Name:

Enter Last Name

Date of Birth:

Enter Date of Birth

Last 4 digits of SSN:

Enter last 4 digits of SSN

Individual 3

First Name:

Enter First Name

Middle Initial:

Enter Middle Initial

Last Name:

Enter Last Name

Date of Birth:

Enter Date of Birth

Last 4 digits of SSN:

Enter last 4 digits of SSN

Individual 4

First Name:

Enter First Name

Middle Initial:

Enter Middle Initial

Last Name:

Enter Last Name

Date of Birth:

Enter Date of Birth

Last 4 digits of SSN:

Enter last 4 digits of SSN

Individual 5

First Name:

Enter First Name

Middle Initial:

Enter Middle Initial

Last Name:

Enter Last Name

Date of Birth:

Enter Date of Birth

Last 4 digits of SSN:

Enter last 4 digits of SSN

Search

Reset

ERAP agencies may use “Yes” results from the COMPASS Benefit Search page to establish categorical income eligibility provided that the applicant has signed an authorization for release of information. A “Yes” indicator for benefits is sufficient verification that the Department of Human Services has established income eligibility at an income limit below the 80 percent area median income after January 1, 2020.