

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### **What is the Hardest Hit Fund Program (HHF)?**

IHDA was approved by the US Treasury Department to receive \$445,603,557 of funding under the Hardest Hit Program (HHF). This Program provides mortgage assistance to homeowners who have experienced an income reduction due to unemployment or substantial underemployment. The assistance allows eligible households to maintain their home while they work to regain employment and financial stability. For more information, please visit the “About the Program” section of this website. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **What are the HHF program eligibility criteria?**

- Property must be located in Illinois.
- Household must have a documented income reduction of 25% due to unemployment or underemployment through no fault of their own.
- Household income must be at or below 120% of the area median income.
- Principal loan balance must not be more than \$500,000.
- Household liquid assets cannot exceed \$10,000 or \$12,500 depending on county.
- Property must be the primary and only residence of all borrowers/owners.
- Property can be a 1-4 unit building, providing the household resides in one (1) of the four (4) units.
- Homeowners must carry a fixed or adjustable rate loan. Interest-only or negative amortization loans are not acceptable.
- Current servicer of the mortgage must agree to accept payments.
- Applicant(s) must not have been convicted of a mortgage-related felony in the last ten years.

If you are uncertain whether or not you qualify for the program, we encourage you to apply. An HHF Review Agency will assist you in determining your eligibility. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **What property types are eligible for HHF assistance?**

Any one of the following types of structures is eligible for HHF assistance:

- A single-family home (1 unit);
- A condominium or townhome (1 unit);
- A manufactured mobile home on a foundation permanently affixed to real estate owned by the applicant(s);
- A two, three, or four unit dwelling in which one (1) unit is occupied by the HHF applicant(s). [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **I or my spouse is in the U.S. Military and do not live in our house right now. Can we still apply?**

Yes. All Borrowers, with the exception of Active Military Personnel, must live in the property for which assistance is being requested. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **What is the difference between the Pre-Hardship and the Hardship Event Income?**

To be eligible for the Hardest Hit Fund, applicants must demonstrate a 25% reduction in income from Pre-Hardship to Hardship. Pre-Hardship income is the income earned prior to the unemployment or under-employment event. Unemployment and under-employment are “Hardship” that caused a reduction in the Borrower / Co-Borrower’s income resulting in an inability to pay the monthly mortgage. Submit enough income documentation to support both Pre-Hardship and Hardship event income. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **Do I have to be currently unemployed to qualify?**

No. If you were unemployed but have regained employment, you may still qualify for the Illinois Hardest Hit Program if you can document the required 25% reduction in income and meet all other eligibility requirements. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **Why does my lender have to agree to participate in the program?**

Your mortgage lender must agree to accept payments from the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) on your behalf. You can still apply to the Illinois Hardest Hit program while we work to establish a formal partnership agreement with your lender. IHDA will notify you if your lender is unwilling to participate or objects to our request to assist you after you have been approved for HHF assistance. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **What types of assistance can I receive?**

The Illinois Hardest Hit Program offers two types of assistance:

- 1. Reinstatement Assistance (RA)** is a one-time payment of all mortgage arrearage, fees, and penalties.
- 2. Monthly Mortgage Payment Assistance (MPA)** pays 100% of monthly mortgage payments for up to 18 months while the household makes a 31% monthly contribution payment to IHDA during their enrollment in the program. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **How do I know which type of assistance I qualify for?**

The actual type of assistance that you receive is determined by the ratio of your income to your housing payment. Available HHF assistance must be sufficient to cure the delinquency (amount that you are behind) and make forward payments in accordance with program guidelines. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **What is the total dollar amount of assistance I can expect to receive?**

The total amount of assistance that is available to eligible households is based on the Illinois county in which you currently reside. Households in counties with levels of unemployment home price decline, or loan delinquency higher than the state average can receive up to \$25,000. Households in all other counties can receive up to \$20,000. For a map of Illinois counties and their maximum assistance amount, please see the "About the Program" section of the HHF website. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **Is the assistance provided by the Illinois Hardest Hit Program a loan?**

Yes. Hardest Hit assistance is provided as a 10 year forgivable loan. A lien will be filed against the property. This assistance is forgiven over the last five years of the 10 year loan term. All borrowers approved for the program will complete a full set of loan documents. Funds may have to be repaid to IHDA if you sell your home at a profit or refinance during the 10 year loan term. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **Can I still apply if I am in a Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP) Trial Period?**

No. Borrowers in a Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP) trial period may not use funds from a Hardest Hit Fund program to make HAMP trial period payments. The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) administers the Hardest Hit Fund (HHF) program. This means homeowners cannot receive HHF Mortgage Payment Assistance (MPA) Program benefits while in a HAMP trial period. Homeowners will need to choose between accepting the HAMP trial period program or the HHF mortgage payment assistance.

**NOTE:** If you are currently in a HAMP trial period and accept HHF-MPA benefits by signing IHDA loan documents, you will be TERMINATED from your HAMP trial period.

**NOTE:** If you have applied for HAMP or are currently being evaluated for HAMP and accept HHF-MPA benefits by signing IHDA loan documents, you will NOT be offered a HAMP trial period plan.

If you accept Mortgage Assistance Payment (MPA) benefits through HHF and are terminated from a HAMP trial period or not offered a HAMP trial period plan, you may reapply for HAMP (pending program availability) after your HHF-MPA benefits end.

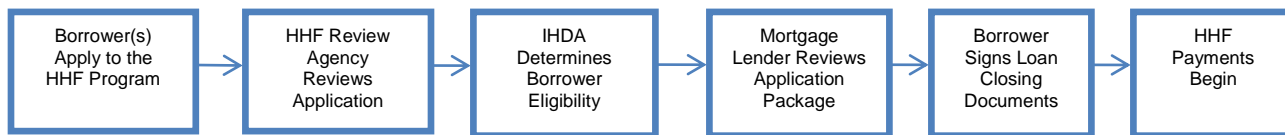
If you have successfully completed **more than half** of your HAMP trial period plan, you may request to delay acceptance of HHF benefits until either a permanent HAMP modification agreement is executed or your HAMP trial period plan is otherwise terminated. Contact your mortgage lender and your HHF Review Agency regarding all HAMP trial period applications. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### What information is needed for the application?

The application for the Illinois Hardest Hit Program is available at [www.illinoishardesthit.org](http://www.illinoishardesthit.org) and this website offers step by step instructions on how to apply. Borrowers and co-borrowers will need to provide information about pre-hardship and hardship income, liquid assets, their property, and their mortgage(s) in order to determine program eligibility. A list of the required documents can be found in the “About the Program” section of this website. Additional documents may be requested by your HHF Review Agency or IHDA during the application review process. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### How is my application processed?

The process shown below is designed to review applications for assistance as quickly as possible. Mortgage lenders must agree to accept payments from IHDA on behalf of each approved applicant in the Hardest Hit Program.



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### How long will it take to process my application?

The length of time it takes for a homeowner to get Illinois Hardest Hit Program assistance depends on several factors:

1. the length of time it takes the homeowner to complete the application and provide all supporting documents;
2. the availability of an HHF Review Agency to meet with homeowners;
3. the homeowner's lender and that lender's processes for approving applications; and
4. the overall volume of applications being processed by your HHF Review Agency and IHDA.

If the homeowner's financial situation changes during the application process, it may also take longer to provide assistance for that homeowner. While IHDA and your HHF Review Agency will work as quickly as possible, it may take 90 days or more to provide assistance. You should continue to pay your mortgage while your application is being processed. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### What is the role of the HHF Review Agency (Sponsor)?

The HHF Review Agency will assist you in preparing your application and the required supporting documentation, answer questions you may have and pre-screen you for eligibility for the program. When you set up a profile in the online application, an HHF Review Agency will be assigned to you or you can choose from a list of agencies that currently serve your area. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### What if I believe the HHF Sponsor has made an error in their decision?

We ask that the borrower initially discuss his or her concerns directly with the assigned HHF Sponsor. However, it is important to note that the borrower must meet basic eligibility criteria to qualify for the HHF program. If an issue still remains, the borrower may contact [hhfappeals@ihda.org](mailto:hhfappeals@ihda.org). [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### What is the Hardship Letter?

In order to receive assistance, households must provide a written explanation in the form of a signed letter detailing their hardship. This document outlines the specific nature of the household's hardship and

the steps the borrower will take to increase or restore the household's income so that the borrower can resume mortgage payments independently at the conclusion of their assistance term. The online application will assist borrowers in creating this letter. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **Do “liquid assets” include my retirement savings?**

No. The “liquid assets” referred to in the eligibility criteria exclude retirement savings, 401K, deferred compensation and other types of retirement accounts. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **I have a bankruptcy. Can I still apply?**

Yes. You can be eligible for HHF and have current or past bankruptcy. If IHDA approves your application, your mortgage lender has the final determination to accept HHF payments made on your behalf if you are or were in bankruptcy. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **Will IHDA pay my property taxes and insurance?**

If your property taxes and insurance are currently escrowed by your lender, then those amounts will be included in the payment that IHDA will make on your behalf. If your taxes and insurance are not currently paid through an escrow account with your lender, IHDA will NOT make these payments and you will be responsible for making those payments as required. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **Will IHDA pay the dues to my condominium association?**

If your condominium assessments are currently escrowed by your lender, then those amounts will be included in the payment that IHDA will make on your behalf. If your condominium assessments are NOT currently paid through an escrow account with your lender, IHDA will NOT make these payments and you will be responsible for making those payments as required. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **Will IHDA pay my home owners association fees?**

If your HOA fees are currently escrowed by your lender, then those amounts will be included in the payment that IHDA will make on your behalf. If your HOA fees are not currently paid through an escrow account with your lender, IHDA will NOT make these payments and you will be responsible for making those payments as required. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **Will I have to make any types of payments?**

Yes. Borrowers approved for the Monthly Mortgage Payment Assistance Program are required to pay IHDA 31% of their existing gross monthly household income. These funds are electronically withdrawn from your bank account on the 15th of each month using ACH (automated clearing house) debit. If you are approved for Monthly Mortgage Payment Assistance, you must have a bank account and provide the information necessary to establish the electronic withdrawal. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **What happens if I don't have enough funds in my account to make my Borrower Contribution?**

If there are insufficient funds in your bank account on the date that IHDA initiates an automatic withdrawal, IHDA will debit your bank account on the 15th of the following month. This ACH (automated clearing house) debit will include both the past due and current month's payment amounts. If the second electronic withdrawal fails you may be terminated from the program.

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### **What if my income or property situation changes while I am in the program?**

Households approved for the Monthly Mortgage Assistance Program are required to report a 10% increase or decrease in income as well as any change in their circumstances that may affect program eligibility, including increase in hours or wages, new employment, loss of employment, increase in business revenues, if you move or sell the property, or other factors that influence your household income or ownership. Changes in income should be reported to [hhfincomechange@ihda.org](mailto:hhfincomechange@ihda.org). Not



reporting these changes may result in termination from the program. If approved, you may be asked to re-certify your eligibility any time during your assistance term. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **Can I be terminated from the Illinois Hardest Hit Program?**

Yes. Reasons for termination include, but are not limited to:

- submitting fraudulent information;
- repeated insufficient bank account balance to withdraw borrower 31% monthly income contribution payments;
- canceling electronic funds withdraw; and/or
- failing to submit requested information during the assistance term. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **What should I do within the online application income section if I have more than one employer?**

Within the Income section we provide three "Other Income" fields. When using additional employer, utilize "Second Job" as the income source. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **What should I do in the income section if I have no income?**

In this case, you would simply input "0.00" in the income field and input "none" in the source field. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **How should I document income received from a roommate?**

Typically, this type of income can be documented with a letter written by you acknowledging how much and from whom you receive this rental income. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **What should I do if I have more mortgage loans or debt than the spaces allow me to input on the "Financial Worksheet"?**

If you have more debt than the Financial Worksheet allows room for, we suggest that you combine these debts under the other expenses input field and label the field "Additional Combined Debt". [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **What should I list as my "Employer Name" and "Hire Date" in Step 1: Borrower Information if I or the Co-Borrower is unemployed?**

If you or the Co-Borrower is unemployed you should list "Unemployed" in the "Employer Name" field and list the date that you began your Unemployment in the "Hire Date" field. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **I forgot my HHF website user name and password.**

Remember your email address is your user name/ID. Click the "Forgot Password?" link on the homepage and you will be emailed your password. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **Is the application portal available in Spanish?**

No. The Illinois Hardest Hit Program website is not currently available in Spanish. Since HHF assistance must be offered as a forgivable loan, the loan documents and application must be in English. Potential applicants are advised to have a trusted source interpret the application and documents for them. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **Why must I have an e-mail account to apply?**

The web hosted application process will allow IHDA to process many more applications than would ordinarily be possible. In order to receive the notifications from your HHF Review Agency, you need to enter an email address. There are many free email sources. Links to some of these sources are available on the HHF website by clicking the "Start Now" button then the "Don't Have Email?" link. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **What if I don't have a computer and/or internet access?**

Free computers and internet access are available at many local libraries and other community centers. You may also consider utilizing the computer of a friend or relative. Utilizing the online application system is the fastest way to make an application to the Illinois Hardest Hit Program.

If none of these options are available to you, contact 855-873-7405. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **How can I find a housing counseling agency in my area if I need housing assistance in addition to HHF?**

A list of approved U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) certified housing counseling agencies is available. These agencies can help you explore other mortgage relief and foreclosure programs. Visit [www.findaforeclosurecounselor.org](http://www.findaforeclosurecounselor.org) or call 1-888-995-HOPE. [\[Back to Top\]](#)

### **What should I do while I am waiting for my application to be processed?**

1. **Do not avoid your lender's communications.** Tell your lender that you are interested in keeping your home and that you are working with a housing counseling agency or HHF Review Agency. Continue to work towards a resolution with your lender and let your HHF representative know if they offer you a loan solution.
2. **Attend all court dates.** This is your opportunity to respond to the lender and ask the judge for additional time to work things out. Let the judge know that you are working with a non-profit housing counseling agency to apply for HHF assistance.
3. **Continue making mortgage payments.** If you continue to make your monthly payments, you may be able to prevent your loan from going into foreclosure.
4. **Prioritize your debts and reduce your expenses.** Make sure that you pay all of your housing bills (mortgage payment, utilities, etc.) each month. Search for ways to cut your monthly expenses.
5. **Talk to relatives, friends, or someone at your place of worship.** Although this is a difficult subject to discuss, family and friends may be willing to help you through this situation.
6. **Continue communicating with your HHF Review Agency.** If you have questions about the status of your application in the coming weeks contact your HHF Review Agency. If you wish to learn more about alternative mortgage loan modification options, call your HHF Review Agency or call 1-888-995-HOPE.

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### **Report Fraud and Scams**

Watch out for mortgage assistance fraud and scams. Mortgage default information becomes public record and you may be solicited by scammers. Do not sign anything without first consulting with a housing agency or a trusted advisor. Do not pay for services. All legitimate counseling and application services are free of charge. If you feel you have become a victim of mortgage assistance fraud, you may contact us at [mortgagefraud@ihda.org](mailto:mortgagefraud@ihda.org). Additional resources include the Loan Modification Scam Hotline at 888-995-4673 or [www.loanscamalert.org](http://www.loanscamalert.org). [\[Back to Top\]](#)