

HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE FUND (HAF)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR REFERRAL AGENTS

How do applicants access HAF?

The HAF is a fund administered by Housing NWT (HNWT). A potential HAF applicant is able to self-refer, but ideally should work with a referral agency (agent) to apply. The Referral Agent acts as the ongoing liaison person between the HAF applicant and Housing NWT.

Responsibilities of Referral Agents

1. Understanding the two (2) HAF application categories: Financial Assistance and Travel Assistance

The Homelessness Assistance Fund (HAF) has two (2) categories. Applicants must choose one category.

A. Financial assistance: provides **one time only** financial assistance for certain costs to provide applicants with assistance to sustain their current housing or to gain access into housing. This can be utilized for rental arrears (private market only), utility arrears, first month's rent, or a damage deposit.

- The maximum HAF funding per application is \$3000. HAF cannot make partial payments on arrears, applicants will need to demonstrate either a payment plan in place to prevent eviction or proof of additional funds to cover the remaining arrears.

- HAF cannot cover unsustainable housing options (ie. Hotel stays) or unsustainable rent situations (ie. Client unable to afford rent on their own after first month is covered or arrears are cleared).

B. Travel assistance: provides **one time, one way only** travel by the cheapest means (air, bus, road etc.) for an NWT resident who is homeless to return to their home community IF their community, family, or friends provide evidence that there will be a home for them and they will no longer be homeless in their community.

- It is the referral agents responsibility to ensure that their clients who have been approved for travel assistance are able to make it to the airport in time for their flight. Clients boarding flights must be sober or the airlines will not let them board the plane- it is the referral agents responsibility to ensure the client knows this. Clients who are intoxicated should not be provided transportation to the airport by the referral agent.

- In the event that a client does miss their flight, the referral agent is **NOT** to rebook their flight without speaking to the HAF program staff. Referral agents are **not permitted** to approve charges on Housing NWT credit cards- this includes the fee the rebook a flight for their clients.
- Clients who are approved for travel must be made aware that HAF does not cover additional bags or pay any oversized luggage fees. If there is a specific request in needs to be included in the HAF application.
- HAF does not provide transportation at the destination- client and referral agents are responsible for this.

2. Determining HAF Eligibility

Before completing a HAF application, you as the referral agent must assess the eligibility of the potential HAF applicant by asking for the following information. Note: Supporting documentation/information may be requested by the HAF Coordinator.

- A)** Has the potential HAF applicant accessed HAF before? If the applicant has previously received HAF assistance, tell them that they are NOT eligible to receive funding again. HAF is **emergency, one-time funding** and all other funding resources need to be exhausted prior to accessing HAF.
- B)** If the potential applicant is a homeowner, they are NOT eligible to receive HAF.
- C)** Is the potential applicant currently homeless, or in immediate danger of becoming homeless?
- D)** Who has the applicant accessed for other options and resources for support, (for example, set up a repayment plan, Income Assistance, friends, family, local community/ Aboriginal/Indigenous government resources, community groups, charities, etc.)?
- E)** How will HAF create a sustainable pathway out of homelessness for this potential applicant?
- F)** A description of factors (in the potential applicant's words as much as possible) that the potential applicant, and/or you, and/or any other agency or significant person involved with the potential applicant have identified that led the potential applicant into this situation of facing homelessness.

3. Applying for HAF

Once you have determined that the potential HAF applicant is eligible to apply to the HAF, the following should occur:

- A)** Application Form: A HAF application (for Travel or Financial assistance) is completed by the Referral Agent on behalf of the HAF applicant and submitted to the HAF Coordinator. Electronic submission is preferable; we do not currently accept walk-ins.

B) Applicant's Written Consent to Disclose Personal Information: A disclosure authorization waiver must be signed to allow both the referral agent and specific representatives of Housing NWT to access information from the relevant parties involved. This signed document is included with the HAF application.

C) All supporting documentation such as ARREARS STATEMENT, RENTAL LEDGERS, EVICTION NOTICE, PROOF OF INCOME INCLUDING PAY STUBS, INCOME SUPPORT FCR, CHILD SUPPORT, CHILD TAX BENEFITS, 30 DAYS BANKING STATEMENTS FOR EACH PERSON RESIDING IN THE HOME, AND FORMS OF IDENTIFICATION ETC. MUST BE SUBMITTED ALONG WITH THE APPLICATION.

D) Make sure that all the following information has been included with the application form:

a. the applicant's full name(s) and any aliases or other names used – names and supporting documentation for both individuals is required if a couple is requesting assistance, or if it is an application from a parent and adult child.

b. detailed information on the family structure (i.e. number and ages of children who reside in the household)

c. clear and detailed information describing the events that led to the applicant's current situation

d. detailed information about the applicant's income and expenses, tentative lease agreement, and proof of income if the applicant is currently a homeowner.

e. proof of the amount of funding being requested (i.e. a bill or invoice)

f. travel assistance- the cost of travel (one way airfare, bus fare)

g. travel assistance - confirmation from family/person that the HAF applicant has a place to stay once they reach their destination

h. description of how assistance from HAF will create a pathway out of homelessness, including the applicant's keeping their housing, and/or gaining access to housing and other supportive services recommended for the applicant to access

i. if the applicant owes more than \$3000, a detailed plan outlining how the applicant will pay the remaining amount they owe

j. information on other options the applicant has explored for assistance

k. the applicant's Consent to share personal information authorization waiver that allows Housing NWT to follow-up with the relevant parties

l. attached to the application form is a consent to share information with Housing NWT, as well as for Housing NWT to request information from other agencies. The referral agent and the applicant **must sign** this form.

m. with the Consent to share the applicant's personal information, Housing NWT may complete a 6, 12, or 24 month follow-up on the applicant (for statistical purposes).

The Application Review Process

The HAF Coordinator will review the application/referral, provide feedback to the Referral Agent and seek any additional information required. If the Coordinator has questions, the referral agent will work with the applicant to provide answers to the Coordinator. **Final decisions about HAF applications cannot be made without all documents.**

If the requested supplementary documentation is NOT received 30 days after the HAF application was received, the file will be closed, and the applicant will need to reapply.

If all with the necessary supplementary documentation is included the Referral Agent will be informed within 3-5 business days from the time that the application is received by Housing NWT that the application has been completed to the satisfaction of both the referral agent and the Coordinator and that the application is ready for processing and review.

HAF applications may take up to 14 business days to review and process, depending on the nature of the request and any other operational requirements. Urgent travel requests are processed withing 3-5 business days. Once the decision to approve or deny has been received, advise the applicant of the outcome.

Payments: The Homelessness Assistance Fund does NOT provide funds directly to individual applicants.

a) If the HAF application is approved for **Financial Assistance**, payment will be made directly to the applicable party (i.e. the rental company/landlord, utility company, etc.). Please make sure that a copy of the financial statements (for example, up to date arrears statement) are provided.

b) In cases where the HAF applicant is applying for **Travel Assistance**, once the HAF application has been approved, Housing NWT will make the necessary travel arrangements and communicate them with the Referral Agent. **Please note:** Housing NWT will only cover expenses for travel and any necessary overnight accommodations en route. Housing NWT does not provide funding for meals or incidentals.

HAF Contact Information

Any questions about HAF and the submission of the HAF applications (including supplementary information) should be forwarded to Housing NWT at:

Phone: 867-767-9328ext. 85026

E-mail: NWTHC_Homelessness@gov.nt.ca

Fax: 867-6773-9436