



# **Gun Lake Tribe**

## **Rental Assistance**

### **Policies & Procedures**

**Effective Date: March 15, 2007**

**Last Revised: September 11, 2008**

#### General Purpose

The Rental Assistance Program provides rental assistance opportunities to qualified applicants as a temporary assistance while they gather all resources to succeed independently. These opportunities will preserve the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish culture and promote safety and self-sufficiency in the families that we service.

This policy is designed to serve as:

- 1) A guide for the Housing Department to use in determining eligibility, applicant admission, selection criteria and occupancy standards for rental assistance.
- 2) A document, which provides for consistent, equitable and uniform treatment of clients.
- 3) A basis for decision-making by Housing Department staff and/or committee members.
- 4) A training manual for newly-hired or appointed Housing Department staff and/or committee members.

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Eligibility for Rental Assistance

The purpose of this section is to determine whether a Tribal member family meets the required eligibility standards within the Housing Department's Rental Assistance Program.

For purposes of this program, family includes, but is not limited to, a family without children, an elderly family, a near-elderly family, a disabled family, a single person or an unmarried couple living together as a family.

- 1) In order to be eligible for rental assistance, applicants must meet all of the below conditions:
  - a) Be an enrolled Tribal member of the Gun Lake Tribe or be the legal guardian in a home that a Gun Lake Tribe minor child has resided in for a minimum of fifteen (15) months;
  - b) Be eighteen (18) years of age or older;
  - c) Reside in one (1) of the following counties; Allegan, Barry, Ingham, Isabella, Kalamazoo, Kent, Muskegon, Newaygo or Ottawa;
  - d) Qualify as a low income family, defined as a family whose income does not exceed 80% of the median income, as published annually by Office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD);
  - e) Live in a space that requires rental payment. For example; apartment, mobile home park, town house, etc. Rental assistance will not be offered for assistance with mortgage payments or when renting an individual room;
  - f) Not be behind more than \$750.00 on their rent at the time assistance is offered;

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- g) Have a completed and accurate application on file in the Housing Department office, including all requested information for each family member living within the household. The applicant is responsible for making corrections or updating the application as necessary. A completed application will include:
  - i) Rental Assistance application;
  - ii) The most current income check stub(s) for all family members within the household;
  - iii) The most current tax returns/W2's for all family members within the household;
  - iv) Social Security cards for all family members within the household;
  - v) All other applicable forms of income for all family members within the household, which may include but is not limited to, child support, unemployment, social security or pension benefits;
  - vi) Voluntary Release of Information form;
  - vii) Inspection Agreement Contract;
  - viii) Rental agreement/lease;
  - ix) Authorization for specific confidential communications. (optional); and
  - x) Any other documents deemed necessary by the Human Services Coordinator, Housing or Member Services Director.

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- h) The rental space must be up to local code as determined by an inspector designated by the Housing Department; and
- i) Applicants must have a complete and up-to-date Contract Health Service (CHS) application on file in the Health office for all Tribal members within the household.
  - i) This requirement will be waived for applicants living outside the Tribe's five (5) county service area (Allegan, Barry, Kalamazoo, Kent and Ottawa County).
  - ii) Applicants deemed ineligible for CHS for failure to apply for Medicaid during an open enrollment period will be allowed to access the program but will be required to:
    - 1) Apply for Medicaid within thirty (30) days of its open enrollment period; or,
    - 2) Contact Contract Health Specialist within thirty (30) days following their six (6) month period of ineligibility; and
    - 3) Update their file if applicable, whichever comes first.

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Criteria For Dispensing Benefits/Available Benefits

This purpose of this section is to outline what benefits are available and how they will be dispersed.

- 1) The applicant is eligible to receive **up to \$250.00** per month for rental assistance.
- 2) The applicant is eligible to receive assistance for a three (3) month block of time, which may be renewed at the Housing Department's discretion, based upon the applicant's satisfactory completion of the criteria (or "goals") set forth below, among other things. The time period for which the applicant may receive benefits is based upon a "block system."
  - i) The block system will provide applicants with a three (3) month block of assistance. The blocks will include;
    - January 1 – March 31
    - April 1 – June 30
    - July 1 – September 30
    - October 1 – December 31
- 3) An applicant's rent amount will be determined by the number of families residing in the household on an equitable basis. If the applicant's monthly rent is less than **\$250.00**, the lesser amount will be paid.
- 4) In the event the applicant is behind in their monthly rental payment at the time of applying for assistance, the Housing Department may offer a one-time payment not to exceed \$750.00 based on the applicant's financial situation. Applicants will be required to locate alternative resources should their delinquent balance exceed \$750.00. If the applicant is unable to locate alternative resources, the applicant will not be eligible to utilize the program. This is a one-time benefit that is only applicable to applicants who enter the program behind in their monthly rental payment.

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- 5) The applicant may be eligible to receive a one-time-only security deposit of **up to \$500.00**, based upon the following terms and conditions:
  - i) The Housing Department will not reimburse the applicant for a security deposit unless prior arrangements have been made between the applicant and the Housing Department.
  - ii) This security deposit assistance will only be provided to each applicant once in the applicant's lifetime, unless the applicant returns the total security deposit amount to the Housing Department. In the event that the applicant returns the total amount advanced for the security deposit to the Housing Department, the applicant will be eligible to receive this assistance in the future.
  - iii) An applicant's receipt of this assistance as a legal guardian of a Gun Lake Tribe minor child does not bar the Gun Lake Tribe minor child from obtaining this assistance when the minor reaches the age of eighteen (18); and
  - iv) Note that the once-in-a-lifetime restriction applies even if the applicant is applying for assistance as a legal guardian of a Gun Lake Tribal minor child.
- 6) If advanced rental payments have been made, reimbursement will be paid to the applicant when supporting documentation is presented.
- 7) All payments will be mailed directly to the landlord.

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Grant Priorities

The purpose of this section is to determine the order in which funding will be granted and the responsibilities of the Housing Department and the applicants within the Rental Assistance Program.

Grant funding will be granted in the order the applications were received. The Housing Committee reserves the right to assess the needs of all applicants and expedite the waiting period in extreme cases as necessary.

1) Funding

The level of funding for all programs is subject to availability of Tribal resources and budget approval, and no entitlement or representations of entitlements of any type or nature are made hereunder.

2) Monitoring and Reporting

The Housing Department is responsible for compliance with this policy. Applicants are responsible for providing accurate information as requested by the Housing Department in a timely and complete manner.

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Receipt and Processing of Applications

The purpose of this section is to outline the basic steps to be followed in the application process and in obtaining and verifying information for the purpose of determining eligibility.

- 1) Application process
  - a) Applications shall be received at the Housing Department office located at **1743 142<sup>nd</sup> Ave. – Suite 6** or mailed to **P.O. Box 218, Dorr, MI 49323**. Completed applications will also be accepted via fax at (616) 681-9520 or via email. Email addresses for members of the housing staff can be found on the Tribal website at [www.mbpi.org](http://www.mbpi.org). All applications are to be fully completed and signed using indelible ink. Immediately upon receipt, the application will be dated and initialed by the Housing Department.
  - b) Income verifications (See 24 CFR 1000.128)

In order to determine that data upon which determination of eligibility, selection, preference, and rents to be charged are accurate; such data must be verified. The preferred method of verification shall be written verification by a third party. In the event that third party verification cannot be obtained, the Housing Department may allow the applicant to submit relevant information provided that the submission contains a notarized statement, certification, or affidavit signed by the applicant stating the information submitted is true and accurate.

Complete, accurate and verified records for each family member consisting of, but not limited to, the following are to be provided by the applicant/participant and maintained by the Housing Department.

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- i) Letters or other statements from employers and pertinent sources giving authoritative information on all amounts of income.
- ii) Copies of documents in the applicant's possession which substantiate his/her statements or a brief summary of the pertinent contents of such documents signed and dated by the staff who viewed them.
- iii) Certified statements or summary data from bank accounts for self-employed person, and from persons whose earnings are irregular, such as salesmen, taxi drivers etc., setting forth gross receipts, itemized expenses and net income.
- iv) Memoranda of verification data obtained by interviews, telephone, or other means, with source, date reviewed and the person receiving the information clearly indicated.

c) Application file

The Housing Department shall maintain a file for each family completing an application. All information supplied by the applicant, verification of information and all relevant correspondence with the applicant, shall be contained in the file. All applications will be kept confidential and available only to the Housing Department staff and committee members. Files will be placed in one (1) of three (3) categories.

i) Eligible

This file contains applications that have met initial eligibility requirements and has been approved for rental assistance. Applicants who are deemed eligible will be notified in writing and begin program procedures.

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ii) Ineligible

This file contains applications that have not met initial eligibility requirements and have been determined to be ineligible for rental assistance. Applicants who are deemed ineligible for assistance will be notified in writing and given the reason for denial of services.

iii) Incomplete/Pending

This file contains applications, which have not been sufficiently completed or verified for a determination of eligibility to be made. Applicants submitting an incomplete application will be notified in writing and given an opportunity to submit the missing information.

d) Placement of applicant within block system

i) The block system will provide applicants with a three (3) month block of assistance. The blocks will include;

- January 1 – March 31
- April 1 – June 30
- July 1 – September 30
- October 1 – December 31

ii) Once an applicant is approved for assistance they will be placed within whatever time block is currently underway. The remainder of the time will be used to schedule and hold an initial meeting with Member Services Director and Human Services Coordinator. Applicants who enter the program with less than ten (10) working days before the current deadline will be provided an additional three (3) month block of time.

e) The applicant must meet with the Member Services Director and the Human Services Coordinator to discuss the steps the

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applicant will take to facilitate the applicant's financial independence and self-sufficiency. These steps, or "goals," must be completed according to the deadlines below in order to qualify for assistance.

- i) All goals are to be completed by the fifteenth (15th) day of December in order to be eligible for assistance for the period of January 1- March 31.
  - ii) All goals are to be completed by the fifteenth (15th) day of March in order to be eligible for assistance for the period of April 1 – June 30.
  - iii) All goals are to be completed by the fifteenth (15th) day of June in order to be eligible for assistance for the period of July 1- September 30.
  - iv) All goals are to be completed by the fifteenth (15th) day of September in order to be eligible for assistance for the period of October 1 – December 31.
- f) Audit
- i) The Human Services Coordinator, Housing and Member Services Director will meet to determine if the applicant continues to meet all policy requirements and has completed all goals as agreed upon by the applicant and the staff person they are working with.
- g) Failure to complete goals
- i) Failure to complete goals, as agreed upon by the applicant, Human Services Coordinator, Housing and Member Services Director, will result in a minimum one (1) month period of ineligibility from the Rental Assistance Program.

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- 1) Re-entrance into the program will depend on the period of time it takes the applicant to complete the agreed upon goals based upon one (1) month increments. Furthermore, the applicant will be required to meet all policy requirements.
  
- 2) Subsequent failures to complete the established goals will result in the loss of rental assistance in increments of month(s) equal to the number of offenses or the increments of month(s) it takes the applicant to complete the agreed upon goals, whichever is longer.

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Program Procedures

The purpose of this section is to outline the basic steps that will be followed once an applicant has been deemed eligible for the Rental Assistance Program. The procedures vary based upon the category of the applicant. The categories are “Temporary/Permanently Disabled,” “Elder,” and “General Applicant.”

**Temporarily/ Permanently Disabled**

A temporary or permanent disability is determined based upon the Housing Department’s review of a physician’s written recommendation, opinion or diagnosis.

- 1) An inspection of the rental space is scheduled and performed.
- 2) The applicant is notified with the status of the inspection. If it is determined a rental space does not meet local code requirements the applicant and Housing Department staff will work together to notify the landlord and have the inspection concerns corrected or locate alternative housing should conditions warrant such action.
- 3) Once the inspection is approved, the applicant is granted the remainder of time in the current block.
- 4) Applicant is notified with their placement in the block system.
- 5) Applicant is referred to Member Services Director to complete specific criteria including, but not limited to;
  - a) Applicant is referred to Member Services Director to obtain information on what employment or educational opportunities exist through this department, which will not interfere with the applicant’s disability, i.e.; General Education Development

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(GED), vocational training, higher education, or have been exempt from further requirements.

- i) Any applicant deemed permanently disabled by the Social Security Administration will be exempt from this requirement.
- b) Applicant is referred to Human Services Coordinator to complete specific criteria including, but not limited to;
  - i) Completion of a resource assessment.
  - ii) Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) Application. This requirement will be waived when Michigan Inter Tribal Council's grant funds for this program are depleted or when the applicant is deemed ineligible based upon income guidelines.
  - iii) Providing certification that the applicant has been diagnosed by a physician as disabled.
  - iv) Preparations of disability claim if not already completed and applicable.
- 6) During the last month of the block system (December, March, June and September) the applicant will undergo an audit which includes;
  - a) Certification from the Member Services Director that the applicant has completed any and all goals as agreed upon by the applicant and Member Services Director relative to locating employment opportunities or furthering the applicant's education, e.g. General Educational Development (GED), vocational training, higher education or have been exempt from further requirements.

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- b) Certification from the Human Services Coordinator that the applicant has completed any and all goals as agreed upon by the applicant and Human Services Coordinator relative to the goals established during the resource assessment or subsequent sessions.
  - c) A review of the applicant's payment history to ensure that the applicant's portion of the rental payment is current.
- 7) When the audit is complete and all program requirements are determined to be completed in a satisfactory matter, the applicant may be granted up to three (3) additional months of rental assistance. A previously granted block of time may be rescinded if the applicant fails to maintain their portion of the rental payment in a current status.
- 8) If deemed applicable by the Human Services Coordinator and/or Housing Director, the applicant will be required to meet with the Housing Director to determine possible goal(s), e.g. locating subsidized or more affordable housing.

**Elder**

Rental assistance for the elderly is not temporary.

Elder is defined as an individual 62 years of age or older.

- 1) An inspection of the rental space is scheduled and performed.
- 2) The applicant is notified with the status of the inspection. If it is determined a rental space does not meet local code requirements the applicant and Housing Department staff will work together to notify the landlord and have the inspection concerns corrected or locate alternative housing should conditions warrant such action.

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- 3) Once the inspection is approved, the applicant is granted the remainder of time in the current block. Subsequent blocks may be granted in two (2) block increments of time.
- 4) Applicant is notified with their placement in the block system.
- 5) Referral to Human Services Coordinator.
  - a) Applicant is referred to Human Services Coordinator to complete specific criteria including, but not limited to;
    - i) Completion of a resource assessment.
    - ii) Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) Application. This requirement will be waived when Michigan Inter Tribal Council's grant funds for this program are depleted or when the applicant is deemed ineligible based upon income guidelines.
- 6) During the last month of the block system (December, March, June and September) the applicant will undergo an audit which includes;
  - a) Certification from the Human Services Coordinator that the applicant has completed any and all goals as agreed upon by the applicant and Human Services Coordinator relative to the goals established during the resource assessment or subsequent sessions.
  - b) Reviewing the applicant's payment history to ensure that the applicant's portion of the rental payment is current.
- 7) When the audit is complete and all program requirements are determined to be completed in a satisfactory matter, the applicant may be granted two (2) additional blocks of rental assistance. A previously granted block of time may be rescinded if the applicant fails to maintain their portion of the rental payment in a current status.

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- 8) If deemed applicable by the Human Services Coordinator and/or Housing Director, the applicant will be required to meet with the Housing Director to determine possible goal(s), e.g. locating subsidized or more affordable housing.

**General Applicant**

This category includes all applicants with the exception of temporarily/permanently disabled or elder applicants.

- 1) An inspection of the rental space is scheduled and performed.
- 2) The applicant is notified with the status of the inspection. If it is determined a rental space does not meet local code requirements the applicant and Housing Department staff will work together to notify the landlord and have the inspection concerns corrected or locate alternative housing should conditions warrant such action.
- 3) Once the inspection is approved, the applicant is granted the remainder of time in the current block.
- 4) Applicant is notified with their placement in the block system.
- 5) Referral to Member Services Director and Human Services Coordinator.
  - a) Applicant is referred to Member Services Director to complete specific criteria including, but not limited to;
    - i) Employment Assistance or educational needs or opportunities.
  - b) Applicant is referred to Human Services Coordinator to complete specific criteria including, but not limited to;
    - i) Completion of a resource assessment.

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- ii) Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) Application. This requirement will be waived when Michigan Inter Tribal Council's grant funds for this program are depleted or when the applicant is deemed ineligible based upon income guidelines.
- 6) During the last month of the block system (December, March, June and September) the applicant will undergo an audit which includes;
  - a) Certification from the Member Services Director that the applicant has completed any and all goals as agreed upon by the applicant and Member Services Director relative to locating employment opportunities or furthering the applicant's education, e.g. General Educational Development (GED), vocational training, or higher education.
  - b) Certification from the Human Services Coordinator that the applicant has completed any and all goals as agreed upon by the applicant and Human Services Coordinator relative to the goals established during the resource assessment or subsequent sessions.
  - c) A review of the applicant's payment history to ensure that the applicant's portion of the rental payment is current.
- 7) When the audit is complete and all program requirements are determined to be completed in a satisfactory matter, the applicant may be granted an additional three (3) months of rental assistance. A previously granted block of time may be rescinded if the applicant fails to maintain their portion of the rental payment in a current status.
- 8) If deemed applicable by the Human Services Coordinator and/or Housing Director, the applicant will be required to meet with the Housing Director to determine possible goal(s), e.g. locating subsidized or more affordable housing.

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Terms and Conditions

The purpose of this section is to explain specific terms and conditions that apply to applicants applying for rental assistance.

- 1) The Housing Department reserves the right to revoke further assistance if there is a violation of the policies or the applicant fails to comply with the terms of the Rental Assistance Program's Policies and Procedures.
- 2) The Housing Department will pay for one (1) inspection per calendar year. All additional inspections will be billed to the applicant at the cost of the service and any additional charges that may apply. The applicant reserves the right to request a waiver to the above rule from the Housing Committee when circumstances beyond their control require more than one (1) inspection per calendar year.
- 3) The granting of rental assistance through the Housing Department does not create a legal relationship with the Tribal member's landlord guaranteeing payment of the rent. The rental contract and fulfillment of its terms will remain between the Tribal member and the landlord.
- 4) Failure to provide all requested information, including failure to report new roommates will result in suspension from all Gun Lake Tribe Housing programs for a minimum of two (2) years and shall subject the applicant to prosecution or such other legal action as deemed appropriate.
- 5) No more than one family within a household can receive Rental Assistance at one time.
- 6) All applications will be reviewed on a case by case basis to assist each individual applicant by the Housing and Pathway Committee. As a result, program requirements may vary depending on the personal needs of each applicant. All decisions are final.