

## **Emergency Relief: Home, Utilities & Burial**

In response to COVID-19, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) will be making the following changes to State Emergency Relief (SER) policy in order to allow for faster processing of emergency requests and to make access to benefits easier to Michigan's most vulnerable households.

Effective Monday, March 30, 2020, the following SER changes will be in effect and should be applied to any case being processed on or after March 30, 2020.

### **1. A phone interview is no longer required.**

- In instances where changes are reported or there are discrepancies that must be resolved, the worker may choose to complete an interview.

### **2. Suspension of one-time energy assists**

- SER energy services will no longer be limited to one payment for the remainder of the fiscal year, however, the service caps will remain the same:
- \$1,200 for propane and fuel oil
- \$850 for all other energy types

### **3. The non-cash asset limit will be increased to \$15,000.**

- The non-cash asset limit will be changed to align with the cash asset limit of \$15,000 for all SER services (except burial when the deceased is the only group member).
- SER groups who are composed of Family Independence Program (FIP), State Disability Assistance (SDA), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medical Assistance (MA) and Food Assistance Program (FAP) recipients continue to have automatic eligibility on the basis of non-cash assets.

### **4. Elimination of the shortfall determination**

- MDHHS will not be making a shortfall determination for any month for energy or utility services until further notice. The required payment amount for electricity, heat, water and sewer services is \$0.

Immediate help may be available if you are facing conditions of extreme hardship or emergencies threatening your health and safety. State Emergency Relief and the Weatherization Assistance Program combine financial assistance and contracts with a network of nonprofit organizations to help low-income households.

Emergency support is designed to maintain low-income households that are normally able to make ends meet but occasionally need help when unexpected emergency situations arise. Emergency support is not an appropriate solution to ongoing or chronic financial difficulties. For ongoing reductions to your energy expenses, be sure to check out the Weatherization Assistance Program.