



2021 SnoCo CARES Flex Funds for Life Sustaining Expenses Program Overview

Our 2021 CARES Act Flex Fund program will generally follow the same eligibility requirements and expense (bills) limitation to “life sustaining” expenses.

All documents referenced in this Overview can be found on the G-Drive/ Coronavirus Response and Plans/2021 SnoCo CARES Act/

Links will be available on the www.ttns.org/staff page

Overview

- CARES CDC Medical Condition Eligibility list has been expanded.

Revised Eligibility and Self-Attestations:

- [English](#)
- [Spanish](#)
- We have a total of \$74,000 available to provide assistance for bills and expenses from January 1 to September 30, 2021. Assistance is available for bills submitted by September 15th or until funding is exhausted, whichever first occurs.
- We also have our year end appeal-raised **Family Assistance Fund** to help families who may not qualify for CARES Assistance. Initially, this will be primarily available to families who meet the CARES Act income / job loss eligibility but are not able to attest to the high-risk medical condition requirement. Please do not turn away anyone who you feel needs and is deserving of our help – let’s talk.
- The County has given us the charge to:
 - o Use our funds to stabilize families
 - o Provide for basic needs
 - o Sustain and help people through this time of the pandemic
 - o Be prudent, but not too prudent because we might have more funding in March
- Clarification of “**Life-Sustaining Needs**” and qualifying expenses
 - o To be eligible for consideration, expenses must have been affordable to the family prior to COVID. For example, if you couldn’t afford to buy a new, \$1,000 computer pre-COVID, it is not a qualifying life-sustaining need.

- **BASIC NEEDS** are eligible for payment. In this round of funding, the County has advised us that they expect, “families will have to make some potentially BIG changes to get through this time.” For example:
 - We paid many cell phone bills with huge, unlimited plans...that might not fly this year
 - “Internet” assistance combined with big cable TV packages will now face increased scrutiny

To follow on the above County advisement, we must **emphasize helping families navigate and learn how to reduce expenses**. A good example is how we did that last year for many families by helping them to apply for PUD low-income discounts. Please be sure to share any lessons learned with other staff. More information to come...

UPDATE February 4, 2020 Re: 2020 Bills

From our SnoCo Grant Admin, Megan Edmonds:

If you start to see requests from 2020 I would really encourage your staff to dig deeper. Be really looking at what the request is, **was a loss of income to COVID really the cause of them not being able to pay for the expense or was it a bill they were going to struggle to pay with or without COVID impact**. I think that later piece is important.

- Technically, the County can require pre-approval of payments over \$2,500. Please caution your clients that amounts in excess of \$2,500 will require a bit more time to consider and may not be approved.
- Last year, we made over 400 payments across all of our Coronavirus Relief programs. Our overall average assistance provided to families was about \$1,300 including rent assistance.
- We provided rent assistance to 56 families with an average payment of \$1,800, paying for 115 months of rent to keep 200 individuals safely housed
- Rent is not covered under our CARES assistance – 211 / VOA and Cocoon House (more info to come) have rent assistance.
- **Maximum Assistance**
 - At present, we will not establish a maximum amount or cap for assistance to new or existing families

- o As the County advised, please be prudent and please carefully examine all bills you submit for assistance
 - Do you have the sense the family is truly in need, or simply relying upon us to make payments for them?
 - Have you explored options to help the family reduce expenses?
 - Is everything in the bill a basic, life sustaining need?
- **Record EVERY CONVERSATION AND INTERACTION** with both new and existing clients in Salesforce. Our County grant admins made a very clear point that having the complete story will be important in the case of an audit – it's important for us, too.

Existing Clients (received assistance in 2020)

APPLICATION: No additional application will be required for clients who qualified for CARES assistance in 2020.

Action steps:

- Review the list of Families Assisted in 2020
You will find this list on the G-Drive
[2020 ALL - Coronavirus Relief Assistance](#)
- If the family has CARES fund payments (**SnoCo CARES**), they are eligible for 2021 assistance without a new application or Self-Attestation.
- **TO DO** in your first interaction with an existing client
 - o Ask for an update on their situation. This will include:
 - Health of family members
 - Employment situation
 - General assessment of their need for assistance
 - Record their comments in Salesforce (more to come) so we will have good notes if the County asks
 - o Express your desire to help them work through some of the challenges they have in meeting basic expenses...
 - "I see there is no low-income discount on the PUD bill you sent me. Can I tell you about that program?"
 - o **Review and update all existing client Salesforce Contact and Family information**
 - When Laron added CARES payments to Family records, he did not update or add family members.

- This is important – we need to record all family members with ages
- You can view all of our [2020 assistance applications here](#) You will find that many families included information for all family members. You can use this to update Salesforce Contact and Family records but please do check in with the family to verify details

New Clients

APPLICATION: Links to applications (English and Spanish) will be on our home page

As in 2020, applications will come from Squarespace emails to Laron who will pass them on to navigators.

SALESFORCE: Create a record of ALL conversations and interactions with new and existing clients within the Contact Record by **Logging Activity**. *We will determine where to record "the story" of need and experience – more to come*

There is no need to create a new Contact / Family for every applicant unless we provide them with assistance or other services.

We have a catch all **Potential Client** account where you can log preliminary conversations (see Salesforce Help Sheet).

ACTION STEPS: Same process as our 2020 CARES program

1. Make certain application is complete with all information we need
2. Complete review of Eligibility Requirements and request Janos or Laron to send Self-Attestation for e-signature
3. Carefully review each bill for completeness
 - a. We cannot accept bills or statements that are more than 30 days old or outside of the current billing cycle
 - b. We cannot pay from statements – we need to be able to see the actual invoice to determine if the expense is eligible and the date of service
 - c. Review the bill for opportunities to reduce the ongoing expense for the family. For example:
 - i. PUD credits or low-income discounts
 - ii. Cell phone bills that include excessive charges – we had one client last year who was paying \$54 per month each for two iPad Pros for 24 months plus \$45 per month data fees for each – we can't pay for that
4. Email (or text if necessary) copy of bill(s) to Laron with brief explanation of continuing need for our assistance
5. As of February 2nd we are still working on the process of getting the payment request and payment made information into Salesforce. More to come.