



# Flexible Assistance Fund Program Guidebook

Updated October 1, 2022

## FLEX FUND PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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Dallas and Collin Counties homeless population faces a variety of needs (beyond housing and supportive services), including access to critical documents, security deposits, basic furniture and household items, a variety of fees, rental arrears, and utilities assistance. **If not met, these needs may prevent them from ending their homelessness quickly and permanently.** The idea of the Flex Fund is simple. **A minor but impactful expenditure impedes a client from (making progress in) ending their homelessness.** The Flex Fund exists to pay for those one-time fees/needs. While it is not the primary monetary solution to ending homelessness in our continuum, it is a funding source for singular bills that stand in between clients and housing.

## AGENCY PARTICIPATION

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Agencies that serve those experiencing homelessness and are a member of the All Neighbors Coalition of Dallas and Collin Counties (TX-600) may access the Flex Fund.

## ELIGIBLE CLIENTS

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The Flex Fund is designed to assist those who are experiencing homelessness. The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009, generally defines an individual or family as homeless if that individual/family, “lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence,” or “has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation,” or lives, “in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing).” Eligible clients must:

1. Have a current active enrollment in HMIS.
  - NOTE: Survivors of domestic violence do not have to be in HMIS, but the agency must be a CoC member.
2. Be receiving active case management.
3. Not have exceeded the allotted maximum
4. Request ends or makes progress in ending the client's homelessness

## ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

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- **Critical Documents** – Documentation needed to overcome barriers to employment, housing, etc. Examples include driver's license, state identification card, and birth certificate.
- **Housing/Household** – Items needed to obtain, sustain and access housing. Examples include security deposits, housing related fees, rental arrears, rental assistance, utilities assistance, and basic household furniture.

The list of eligible items is NOT exhaustive. If agency staff has any concern about the eligibility of an item, they should submit a request to Housing Forward via Jotform and advocate for the specific need and its connection to the client's self-sufficiency.

## MAXIMUM AWARD

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Requests can be made up to \$750, per calendar year. Housing Forward will review these requests on a case-by-case basis and approve or deny the request as necessary.

## PROOF OF LAST RESORT

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Agency staff wishing to access the fund are expected to have utilized or attempted to utilize all applicable existing funds and resources and be able to state that no other existing community resources can meet the specific need. Agency staff must be able to explain why the client cannot pay for the need out of his/her funds. Case managers are expected to research alternative options and use good judgment when submitting a Flex Fund request. Additional specific guidelines include:

- **Critical Documents** – Clients must utilize the Stewpot for critical documents prior to submitting a Flex Fund request. Supporting documentation must be attached to the Flex Fund request form. **Housing Forward is able to reimburse agencies for the cost of IDs and Birth Certificates via Agency Reimbursement ONLY.**
- **Housing/Household** – If the Flex Fund request pertains to housing (application fee, security deposit, risk fee, etc.), a letter or brochure containing necessary fees must also be submitted for new move-ins. *Security deposits and risk fees will not be paid until the client has been approved for the unit. Documentation of approval is necessary.*
  - *Example: A client has received a housing choice voucher and needs assistance with paying a risk fee. The client contacted Center Pointe and was denied assistance because the client is receiving another subsidy. Documentation would include a brochure from the apartment complex outlining the fees.*

## PAYMENT PROCESS

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HMIS: The case manager ensures that the client has a current record in HMIS, and is enrolled in active case management, having been accurately assessed, within the last 90 days. (The client may be in another agency's program.)

FLEX FUND REQUEST: The case manager completes the [Housing Forward Flex Fund Request Online Form](#) and attaches all necessary documentation. The form includes custom questions and requirements for your specific type of request. It asks for basic info of the client, the solution needed, including cost and vendor, and articulation of how this will help him or her resolve their homelessness.

APPROVAL: Housing Forward receives the online request submission with documentation. Housing Forward staff requests additional information as needed, and then approves or denies the request based on program guidelines and client eligibility.

PAYMENT: Payment is NEVER made directly to the client or the case manager. Housing Forward approves and provides payment made out directly to the vendor in a variety of ways including:

- Check (Pick Up) – Case manager picks up the check from Housing Forward and delivers it to the vendor. The Case manager must sign for the check.
- Check (Mail) – Housing Forward sends a check directly to the vendor at the address given on the Housing Forward Flex Fund Request Online Form.
- Agency Reimbursement – Agency pays the vendor and is reimbursed by Housing Forward. (Agency must still get the payment approved in advance.
  - Invoices of cost will still be needed.
  - For agency reimbursement, the agency is the payee. The W-9 will be specific to the agency requesting reimbursement.
  - These requests should be submitted as soon as possible to allow for processing time. A typical agency reimbursement will take 3-5 business days to process.

REPORT: Housing Forward keeps record of all payments within an online restricted database.

## **PAYMENT PROCESS (Dallas Furniture Bank)**

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### **Submissions for Dallas Furniture Bank are made online through the Housing Forward Flex Fund Request**

**Online Form.** Furniture requests must follow these guidelines:

- Clients may request up to 5 basic items of furniture plus a bed frame from the list below to be purchased through the Flex Fund.
- Clients may independently purchase non-basic furniture items such as rugs and lamps if they choose to do so. Items purchased independently by a client on the client's designated appointment day may be included in the delivery at no additional charge to the client.
- Case Managers must provide a copy of the signed lease as part of the online submission.
- Clients must provide their ID and a current copy of their lease on their designated shopping day.
- Clients may shop only during their designated appointment, unless other arrangements have been made with the Dallas Furniture Bank in advance. Reschedules are not allowed.

Once approved, the case manager will receive an e-mail from Housing Forward staff with confirmation of furniture request to Dallas Furniture Bank. Please do not contact Dallas Furniture Bank directly unless instructed to do so by Housing Forward staff.

\* The above descriptions assume that the person utilizing the fund on behalf of the client is a case manager, since this is the typical user. It is not meant to preclude other trained agency staff.

For more information about the Flex Fund. Please visit our website at <https://www.housingforwardntx.org/flex-fund/>.

## Flex Fund Required Documentation

Documentation requirements are required questions on the online form and depend on the type of request.

Flex Fund Type	Required Documents
Application Fee, Administration Fee, Security Deposit, Risk Fee	Invoice or letter from payee verifying application fee W-9
Move-In Fees	Invoice or letter from payee verifying rent W-9
Gov't or State ID/ DL, Reinstatement Fee, Change of Address, SSN	<b>AGENCY REIMBURSEMENT ONLY</b> W-9
Birth Certificate (In & Out of State)	<b>AGENCY REIMBURSEMENT ONLY</b> W-9