

# HomeSaver: Retaining the Dream of Homeownership

**District of Columbia Housing Finance Agency**  
Special Achievement: COVID-19 Response

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**Respond to an important state need:**

As the COVID-19 pandemic caused many D.C. residents to have fewer hours of work or lose their jobs altogether, the D.C. Housing Finance Agency (DCHFA or “the Agency”) wanted to ensure that there were programs in place to help homeowners not lose their homes to foreclosure. The [HomeSaver Foreclosure Prevention program](#) was created to assist unemployed and underemployed homeowners who had fallen behind on their mortgage payments. DCHFA originally launched HomeSaver in 2010 and during its tenure assisted 860 residents to save their homes. As everyone began to realize the pandemic and its effects were not going to subside any time soon, DCHFA saw an opportunity to relaunch the program. The Agency had \$4 million remaining in its allocation of funding from the U.S. Department of Treasury’s Hardest Hit Fund (HHF). The Agency lobbied the Treasury Department and was granted approval to reopen the program for a new round of mortgage assistance however the application period was limited to three months. There was no time to waste informing homeowners that the program was once again available.

**DCHFA Innovates:**

The HomeSaver Foreclosure Prevention program consisted of two categories of assistance. First was the Unemployment and Underemployment Assistance program which provided assistance to unemployed and underemployed homeowners through a one-time payment of up to 16 months of mortgage and/or condominium fee delinquency in order to bring the mortgage current. This program also provided up to an additional 11 months of mortgage and/or fee payments going forward in order to keep the homeowner current through December 2021. The second category was known as Restore Assistance. This was available to homeowners who had suffered a financial hardship and needed a lump-sum payment to catch up on arrear but could sustain their regular payments moving forward. Restore Assistance covered any property-related payments necessary to cure a default and prevent foreclosure, including but not limited to mortgage payments, property taxes, hazard insurance, late fees, condominium fees, homeowners’ association fees and legal fees.

When DCHFA relaunched the program in February 2021, the goal was to find a way to reach as many D.C. homeowners as possible. The Agency needed to know in which wards and neighborhoods homeowners had been most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. By working with community-based organizations, DCHFA was not only able to cast a wider net, but also was able to target areas where people were most in need of financial assistance. DCHFA discovered that most of the people who were in need were older, people less likely to find out about the program through social media. For that reason, DCHFA channeled most of its outreach efforts to more traditional media like on-air radio and television. The Agency also runs monthly print and online advertisements which were all updated to include information about HomeSaver.

**Achieve intended results:**

Through paid and earned media, DCHFA was able to reach homeowners across all eight wards of the District of Columbia. An article in the [Washington Post](#) reached more than 70 million people. Additional coverage included [Yahoo! Finance](#), the Associated Press, [National Mortgage](#)

[Professional](#), [DSNews](#), [UrbanTurf](#), [HillRag](#), [WJLA-TV](#), [WUSA9-TV](#), [WHUR](#) (radio) and Magic 102.3 (radio).

Since DCHFA was successful in spreading the word about HomeSaver, it succeeded in getting homeowner to apply and was also successful in following through on and providing residents the financial assistance they so desperately needed. The Agency was able to help 50 D.C. residents save their homes from foreclosure by distributing \$1.1 million in funds.

### Benefits outweigh the costs:

The Agency spent \$20,000 to market the HomeSaver Foreclosure Prevention program. This was a small price to pay to be able to help save D.C. residents' homes. The paid advertising also led to additional earned media, which helped the Agency cast an even wider net across the District. More figuratively, relaunching HomeSaver cost the Agency a lot of extra hours. The program relaunched in February 2021 and all applications had to be turned in by 5 p.m. on May 14. The Agency's Single Family Programs team worked around the clock to review and process applications before the deadline so that homeowners could receive financial assistance as soon as possible.

# HomeSaver



**A Hardest Hit Fund Initiative**  
District of Columbia Housing Finance Agency

#### Mortgage Assistance

##### Key Components:

- **Lifeline Assistance** – One-time payment of up to sixteen (16) months mortgage delinquency (PITIA); Applicant must be receiving unemployment benefits within twelve (12) months of application (unemployment) or have experienced an involuntary reduction of income of at least 10% within the past twelve (12) months (underemployment).
- **Mortgage Assistance** – A maximum of \$60,000 (combined with Lifeline) of monthly payments through December 31, 2021 (PITIA); Applicant must be receiving unemployment benefits within twelve (12) months of application (unemployment) or have experienced an involuntary reduction of income of at least 10% within the past twelve (12) months (underemployment).

##### Eligibility Requirements:

- District of Columbia Homeowner(s) residing in the property as his/her primary residence
- Homeowner named on the Note, Deed of Trust and/or Deed
- Homeowner(s) who are receiving unemployment benefits at the time of application or have experienced an involuntary reduction in income of 10% or more
- Homeowner(s) who are NOT in active bankruptcy.

##### Additional Resources:

- Fact Sheet

#### Restore Assistance

##### Key Components:

- **Restore Assistance** – One-time payment, up to \$60,000, to "catch-up" on delinquent property-related expenses. Applicant must be able to sustain future payments going forward

##### Eligibility Requirements:

- District of Columbia homeowner(s) residing in the property as his/her primary residence
- Homeowner(s) whose property related delinquency is greater than \$2,500
- Homeowner(s) must have experienced an eligible involuntary financial hardship resulting in reduced income due to change in employment, medical hardship, death of a spouse/co-borrower, divorce or disability
- If default is cured, must be able to afford future payments without additional assistance
- Non- escrowed property taxes, such as in the case of a reverse mortgage, may be paid through the remainder of the current billing cycle.
- Homeowner(s) gross income cannot exceed \$120% Area Median Income (\$140,640)
- Homeowner(s) total housing expense payment must be 45% of gross income or less.

##### Additional Resources:

- Fact Sheet

Apply for HomeSaver

## DC Housing Finance Agency Homesaver Program

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