

Community Navigators Remove Barriers to  
Accessing Assistance  
**Delaware State Housing Authority**  
Special Achievement

**HFA Staff Contact**

Laurie Stovall

[laurie@destatehousing.com](mailto:laurie@destatehousing.com)

**HFA Name:** Delaware State Housing Authority  
**Entry Title:** Community Navigators Remove Barriers to Accessing Assistance  
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**Summary:**

In 2022, the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) issued \$2.3 million in grants through the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Program Housing Stability Services (HSS) sub-allocation to support a Community Navigation Program (CNP). The purpose of CNP was to connect ERA-eligible households with much-needed rental and utility assistance supported by ERA and distributed by DSHA through the Delaware Housing Assistance Program (DEHAP).

**Context:**

Delaware launched DEHAP in March 2020 after the public health emergency declaration regarding COVID-19. Recognizing that many Delaware tenants could not pay rent due to employment shutdowns, closures or layoffs, reduced work hours, unpaid leave, and other financial hardships related to the health crisis, DSHA leveraged state and local funding to provide limited rental and utility assistance to qualifying households.

In this early iteration of the program, tenant households submitted a one-page application to request up to \$2,000 to assist with rental and utility arrears. DSHA relied on eight community partner organizations to determine household eligibility for the program by verifying documentation supporting their employment and rental situations. With their assistance, DEHAP disbursed more than \$2.04 million on behalf of more than 1,200 households.

Months later, DEHAP received a substantial infusion of funding through the CARES Act, and DSHA scaled up the program in response to disburse the time-limited funding quickly. This new iteration of the program was primarily landlord-driven, with property providers submitting applications for assistance and collecting and providing required documentation from their tenants, thus reducing the need for community partners to assist with determining household eligibility.

In 2021, DEHAP received an even more considerable investment in funding through two allocations of ERA funding, totaling \$352 million and expiring within a relatively short timeframe. The program's capacity and potential impact tripled in what felt like an instant.

DSHA acknowledged the opportunity and restructured the program so that this historic funding could assist as many Delawareans as possible. DSHA worked with vendors to build an entirely new online application portal accessible to landlords and tenants, requiring each party to provide documentation and information to support their joint request for DEHAP assistance.

The program's restructuring left DSHA with a critical need to promote DEHAP widely and increase program access for qualifying households. Recognizing what had worked so well in the first iteration of DEHAP, DSHA once again turned to our community partners to connect with and provide application support to eligible households.

In November 2021, DSHA issued a Notice of Funding Availability to support nonprofit community partners in assisting ERA-eligible households with packaging and submitting their applications to DEHAP. The goal was to engage enough providers with enough staff to give the program a statewide reach and offer virtual, in-person, and multilingual services.

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In December 2021, DSHA announced \$2.3 million in grant awards to 15 community partner agencies operating throughout the state, supporting more than 50 staff positions within those agencies. Grants were effective from January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022, and were extended for six months until June 30, 2023.

### **Summary of the CNP Program:**

DSHA relies on nonprofit community partners to support many DSHA-operated or -funded programs designed to assist Delaware households needing housing assistance and supportive services. Leveraging state and federal funds, DSHA has created and sustained programs that provide homelessness prevention services, ongoing rental assistance for special needs households, rapid rehousing assistance, and legal services for tenants in crisis. Each of these program offerings requires a strong community-based partner to engage eligible applicants and assist them with accessing program resources.

Years of collaborating with these partner organizations, including the organizations mentioned above, have revealed the following challenges time and again: 1) client-centered programs are primarily structured to provide direct client assistance, and 2) still, funding for those programs is often insufficient to hire or sustain a full-time staff person to provide the services the funder expects.

CNP addressed these challenges in the following ways:

- Up to 90% of grant funds could be used for salaries and benefits and up to 10% for relevant program administration expenses. Over the program's life, CNP funds have supported 51.5 new and existing staff positions at 15 partnering agencies.
- DEHAP itself would fulfill the direct client assistance component. Between January 1, 2022, and April 28, 2023, Community Navigators successfully submitted more than 3,400 requests for DEHAP assistance for 2,500 Delaware renter households, resulting in approximately \$13.5 million in rental and utility assistance disbursed.

### **Additional Impact of the CNP Program:**

Community Navigators have also successfully connected ERA-eligible households to other programs and resources that can assist beyond DEHAP, including legal representation services, access to mainstream benefits, financial literacy and budget counseling, and workforce development.

### **Future of the Program:**

As ERA direct assistance funds have been largely depleted, the DEHAP application portal closed almost entirely on January 2, 2023. The program is still accepting new applications on a minimal basis for the highest-needs households: those with a pending eviction with a scheduled court date and those with utility shutoff notices. Households meeting those qualifications must apply through a Community Navigator.

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In the absence of DEHAP, DSHA recognized the need for an assistance program to help households access other resources that will enable them to maintain long-term housing stability. In April 2023, DSHA introduced a Notice of Funding Availability to support the Housing Outreach and Stability Services (HOSS) Program. ERA-HSS funds will sponsor this program and build off the successes and lessons learned through CNP.

Funds will once again be utilized to support staffing costs and relevant administrative expenses at nonprofit partner agencies that will retain staff to assist households with navigating the post-DEHAP housing landscape.

From the initial iteration of CNP through its ongoing evolution to the HOSS program, Delaware has seen a much-needed spark in the housing environment and a successful kindling of new partnerships. The time, lessons learned, and resources dedicated to CNP will carry through DSHA's program offerings in the future.

DSHA is proud of its work to seize the opportunity to enhance the ability of community-based housing advocates to do the work they do best. While funds may have been temporary, DSHA and our CNP partners' efforts have ensured that the investment in our communities will yield long-term results, particularly as households within those communities rebound and rebuild in the wake of COVID-19.

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## VISUAL AIDS

### Testimonials:

*“So, one of my clients just got hired with the new Avelo Airlines. I am so excited for her but she credits her assistance from DEHAP. She said that when she lost her other job and got behind, she was too stressed about being evicted to think about searching for employment. But with DEHAP’s help, she was able to get caught up and focus on finding another job which she has done. I’m so happy for her.” – DEHAP Community Navigator*

### Sample Social Media Graphics

**SUSSEX COUNTY**  
**IN-PERSON DEHAP APPLICATION ASSISTANCE**

We can personally help you with your Delaware Rental Assistance Program Application (DEHAP). Contact or visit one of our local Community Navigator locations in Sussex County.

**NCALL Research**  
 (302) 678-2400  
[www.ncall.org](http://www.ncall.org)

**Community Resource Center**  
 (302) 227-1340  
[www.rehobothcommunitycenter.org](http://www.rehobothcommunitycenter.org)

**People's Place II, Inc.\*\***  
 302-734-0319  
[www.peoplesplace2.com](http://www.peoplesplace2.com)

\*\*The following are only accepting applications from existing program participants. This project is being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number ERA0262 awarded to DSHA by the U.S. Department of the Treasury

**NEW CASTLE COUNTY**  
**IN-PERSON DEHAP APPLICATION ASSISTANCE**

We can personally help you with your Delaware Rental Assistance Program Application (DEHAP). Contact or visit one of our local Community Navigator locations in New Castle County.

**West End Neighborhood House**  
 (302) 658-4171  
[www.westendnh.org](http://www.westendnh.org)

**Brandywine Counseling**  
 (302) 395-5600  
[www.brandywinecounseling.com](http://www.brandywinecounseling.com)

**Latin American Community Center**  
 (302) 654-0126 [www.thelatincenter.org](http://www.thelatincenter.org)

**Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League**  
 (302) 622-4300  
[www.mwul.org](http://www.mwul.org)

**Lutheran Community Services**  
 (302) 654-8886  
[www.lcsde.org](http://www.lcsde.org)

**YWCA Delaware\*\***  
 (302) 658-7110  
[www.ywcade.org](http://www.ywcade.org)

**New Castle County Community Services\*\***  
 (302) 656-2348  
[www.nccde.org](http://www.nccde.org)

**Ministry of Caring**  
 (302) 652-5523  
[www.ministryofcaring.org](http://www.ministryofcaring.org)

\*\*The following are only accepting applications from existing program participants. This project is being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number ERA0262 awarded to DSHA by the U.S. Department of the Treasury

**KENT COUNTY**  
**IN-PERSON DEHAP APPLICATION ASSISTANCE**

We can personally help you with your Delaware Rental Assistance Program Application (DEHAP). Contact or visit one of our local Community Navigator locations in Kent County.

**NCALL Research**  
 (302) 678-9400  
[www.ncall.org](http://www.ncall.org)

**Central Delaware Habitat**  
 (302) 346-0220 ext. 117  
[www.centraldelawarehabitat.org](http://www.centraldelawarehabitat.org)

This project is being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number ERA0262 awarded to DSHA by the U.S. Department of the Treasury

**DELAWARE RENTAL ASSISTANCE**

**WHAT IF I'M FACING EVICTION OR HOMELESSNESS?**

Individuals experiencing emergencies, such as eviction with a set court date, immediate risk of homelessness, or utility cut-off, can start a new application for assistance through one of the program's 15 Community Navigators.

[decovidhousinghelp.com](http://decovidhousinghelp.com) | Call: (866) 935 - 0407

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Delaware State Housing Authority  
Contact: Laurie M. Jacobs  
E: [laurie@destatehousing.com](mailto:laurie@destatehousing.com)  
P: (302) 739 – 4263 ext. 271



## **DELAWARE STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY GRANTS \$2.5 MILLION TO STRENGTHEN STATEWIDE PARTNERSHIPS FOR ITS DEHAP PROGRAM**

*15 Community Organizations To Aid Delawareans In Need Of Rent And Utility Assistance*

**DOVER, Del., March 24, 2022** - Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) has awarded \$2.5 million in Community Navigation Program grants to 15 community partner organizations throughout the state. Each organization will have dedicated staff who will aid Delawareans seeking rent or utility assistance due to financial hardships caused by the pandemic.

The 15 DEHAP Community Navigation partners include Brandywine Counseling and Community Services, Catholic Charities, Central Delaware Habitat for Humanity, Rehoboth Community Resource Center, Housing Alliance Delaware, Latin American Community Center, Lutheran Community Services, Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League, Ministry of Caring, NCALL Research Fund, New Castle County Government, People's Place II, Inc., Terrie M. Williams Expansion Project, West End Neighborhood House, and YWCA Delaware.

“We’ve been helping the community with rental arrears for years and know that living paycheck to paycheck is like sailing on a rocking ship. If we can help calm the waters, then families can move forward successfully,” said Jo Allegro-Smith, Executive Director of the Community Resource Center. “No one organization can do it alone. The Community Navigation Program is a benefit because it brings together partners throughout the state to advocate on behalf of tenants. That’s how meaningful, long-term change for Delawareans is achieved.”

Each organization is trained by DSHA and equipped to help the eligible Delawareans gather or scan required documentation, access the internet in areas where broadband is unreachable, submit applications through the online portal, and connect with DSHA to answer questions about application status.

“West End understands that Delawareans face a critical shortage of affordable housing and that teenagers and young adults face additional challenges that further complicate their ability to access such housing,” said Paul F. Calistro, Jr., Executive Director of the West End Neighborhood House, Inc. “We are grateful for this partnership with the Delaware State Housing Authority and are committed to helping increase access to affordable housing for those most in need.”

The DEHAP Community Navigation Program is funded through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, which was distributed by the U.S. Treasury Department to Delaware in

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December 2020 and March 2021. The funds are being administered by DSHA and are available until 2025.

"We're thrilled to partner with community organizations that are so passionately invested in keeping Delawareans housed," Eugene Young, director of the Delaware State Housing Authority. "These partnerships will produce the specific, individualized supports the community needs as the state recovers from the pandemic. Their participation will deepen and enrich the program's reach and ensure that the federal dollars are spent efficiently. We're thankful to work with them."

The DEHAP Rental Assistance program provides emergency housing assistance to renters affected by shutdowns, closures, layoffs, reduced work hours, unpaid leave, or financial hardship related to the COVID-19 health crisis.

Since its launch, DEHAP has dispersed over \$50 million in rent and utility assistance, helping over 8,000 Delawareans. For questions about DEHAP, please call 866-935-0407 or text (302) 204-5676. To apply online or learn more about the DEHAP Community Navigators, please visit <https://decovidhousinghelp.com/>.

#### **About Delaware State Housing Authority**

The Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA), formed in 1968, is dedicated to providing quality, affordable housing opportunities and appropriate supportive services to low- and moderate-income Delawareans. In addition to its role as the State's Housing Finance Agency, DSHA is unique in that it also serves as a Public Housing Authority and acts as a Community Development and Planning Agency. As a Public Housing Authority, DSHA receives funding from HUD to build, own and operate public housing in Kent and Sussex counties, two of Delaware's three counties. For more information about DSHA, please call (302) 739-4263 or visit [destatehousing.com](http://destatehousing.com).

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**[Delaware Public Media: Delaware Headlines](#)**

By **[Quinn Kirkpatrick](#)**

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**Delaware Housing Authority launches new program to help out renters affected by pandemic**



The Delaware Housing Authority is sending \$2.5 million to community organizations statewide to launch the DEHAP Community Navigation Program.

DEHAP is a rental assistance program available to Delawareans struggling to pay their rent and utilities due to financial hardship created by the pandemic. It can also cover fees incurred as a result of not being able to pay rent on time.

Since its launch, DEHAP has dispersed over \$50 million in rent and utility assistance, and helped over 8,000 Delawareans.

But DHA hopes to expand its reach to make sure all Delawareans who can benefit from DEHAP apply for it.

Laurie Jacobs is a spokesperson for the Delaware Housing Authority. She says that's where the DEHAP Community Navigation Program comes in.

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“The purpose is to expand access to the program,” she said. “The DEHAP application requires internet, it requires gathering specific documents, and we believe these community navigators can help Delawareans do that.”

She adds that because the program is statewide, there are areas where broadband or computer access may be an issue for applicants.

The 15 community organizations across the state that are participating in this program are trained to help Delawareans through the DEHAP application process, and will provide applicants with the necessary tools they need to get their applications in.

Jacobs says that this program is reflective of the DHA’s values.

“It is our agency’s mission to provide affordable housing to Delawareans. We are very passionate about finding really innovative ways to do that as well,” explained Jacobs. “So Delaware was one of the first states to set up their rental assistance program during the pandemic, and I think that really speaks to the leadership's value of really trying to be responsive and get out there as soon as possible.”

The DEHAP Community Navigation Program is funded through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, distributed by the U.S. Treasury Department to Delaware in December 2020 and March 2021.

DEHAP funds will be available until 2025, and the DHA encourages anyone eligible to apply.

To apply online or learn more about the DEHAP Community Navigators, visit <https://decovidhousinghelp.com/>.