Coronavirus (COVID-19) Extreme Hardship Support Program

Questions and answers

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What is the Extreme Hardship Support Program?

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is commissioning the Red Cross to deliver an Extreme Hardship Support Program to provide financial assistance, information and referrals to people living in Victoria who are experiencing significant hardship as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and are unable to access other forms of Victorian Government and Commonwealth Government income support. The program is targeted to support the most vulnerable in our community – including temporary and provisional visa holders and undocumented migrants with little or no income, savings or community support.

In addition to the work of the Red Cross, the Brotherhood of St Laurence will support community organisations to identify and support eligible people to apply.

Who can apply?

To apply, you must:

- ☐ live in Victoria, and
- ☐ be unable to access Commonwealth income support (such as JobKeeper or JobSeeker) or the Victorian International Student Emergency Relief Fund, and
- ☐ have zero or very limited income, savings or community support, and
- ☐ be a temporary or provisional visa holder, or an undocumented migrant.

How do I apply?

To apply for emergency financial assistance go to the Red Cross website /www.redcross.org.au/vicrelief. You will need your passport and bank statements showing transactions for the last three months.

When can I apply?

Applications can be made from Monday 13 July via the Red Cross website at www.redcross.org.au/vicrelief.

Currently, there is no closing date for submitting an application. It is anticipated that the program will be operating until December 2020.

Is assistance available in my language?

Yes. Through the portal you can request the Red Cross call you back with an interpreter in any language.

The website will soon include information in Farsi, Malay, Nepali, simplified Chinese, Spanish, Tamil, Urdu and Vietnamese.

What if I need help applying?

When you start your application on the Red Cross website, you can enter your contact details and request that someone from Red Cross call you to help with your application. You can request that they call you back with an interpreter in your language.

Some community organisations are also happy to assist with the application process.

Applying for assistance is free. You should not pay an agency to help you complete the application.

How much money can I receive? Why are people receiving different amounts?

A single person may receive up to $400. Families may receive more, based on the number of people in the family or individual circumstances.

You may be able to apply for an additional payment after two months if you are still experiencing financial hardship.

When and how will I be paid?

If you are eligible for the program and complete your application correctly, you will receive a payment into your bank account within five days.

Payments may take longer if the application is not completed correctly. Red Cross will contact you if they need more information to process your application

If you do not have a bank account, Red Cross will talk to you about an alternative way to receive financial assistance.

What other supports are available to me?

People on temporary and provisional visas and undocumented migrants can access a range of health and wellbeing supports during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

This includes free coronavirus (COVID-19) testing and treatment <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/getting-tested-coronavirus-covid-19>, even if you do not have a Medicare card.

Other support includes help with rental hardship, family violence, and mental health support. For a full list of current support options available go to the Red Cross website at www.redcross.org.au/vicrelief.

Do I need to have tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) to be eligible for this program?

No. Emergency financial assistance is available for people experiencing financial hardship as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. For example, this could be because you have lost your job.

There is a separate payment available for Victorian workers who, as of 20 June 2020, have been instructed by the Department of Health and Human Services to self-isolate or quarantine at home because they are either diagnosed with coronavirus (COVID-19) or are a close contact of a confirmed case. Please visit the DHHS website at www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/covid-19-worker-support-payment to find out more about this separate payment.

I don’t live in Victoria. Can I apply?

No. This program is only for people living in Victoria.

What if I don’t have the right visa documents?

This program is aimed at supporting people living on a range of temporary and provisional visas, including people with expired visas If you do not have the right visa documents, Red Cross will talk with you confidentially about other ways to prove your eligibility. Red Cross does not report to government on an individual’s visa circumstances.

I have already received a payment from the International Student Emergency Relief Fund. Am I eligible for this payment as well?

No, at this stage you are not eligible for this payment if you have received a payment from the International Student Emergency Relief Fund <https://www.studymelbourne.vic.gov.au/news-updates/international-student-emergency-relief-fund>. This program is prioritising people who were not able to access support through the International Student Emergency Relief Fund.

I have already received a payment from Red Cross or another community organisation to meet my urgent needs during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Am I eligible for this payment as well?

Yes, you can apply for additional assistance through this program.

I am eligible for income support (such as from Centrelink – JobSeeker, Job Keeper) but have not applied because it may affect my visa or my sponsor. Am I eligible for this payment as well?

No, this program is for people who are not eligible to access any other form of income support. This includes JobSeeker, JobKeeper, other Services Australia payments, and Status Resolution Support Services payments.

If my application is unsuccessful or not enough to meet my needs, how else can I access financial support?

The Red Cross website <https://www.redcross.org.au/vicrelief> also provides information about other supports available to people living in Victoria on temporary visas.

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 1300 651 160, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email Emergency Management Communications <em.comms@dhhs.vic.gov.au>.

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Available at Victoria's coronavirus website <www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>