

# FreshStart FAQs

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1. What is the Georgia Fresh Start Program?

An initiative led by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta (UWMA) that provides one-time financial crisis assistance to eligible individuals with overdue housing or utility expense balances.

2. Who funds the Fresh Start program?

The Fresh Start Program is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).

3. Who is the intended population?

The Fresh Start Program is for people who are in danger of eviction or foreclosure, or for people who are unable to pay high energy bills due to loss of income/economic downfall.

4. Who is DHS?

The Department of Human Services (DHS) provides Georgia with customer-focused human services that promote child and adult protection, child welfare, stronger families and self-sufficiency.

5. Who is eligible for the program?

All applicants **MUST**:

- be a U.S. citizen or legal alien
- be a resident of the state of Georgia
- be a caretaker of a minor dependent child living in the home OR be the non-custodial parent participating in the Georgia Fatherhood Program whose child is receiving TANF
- have an income at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level
- live at the address provided on the Application for Benefits

6. Who reviews applications and determines eligibility?

Local agencies will determine a client's eligibility. United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta will evaluate and approve eligibility, disburse payment to the vendors and invoice DHS.

7. What are the income eligibility requirements?

Applicants **MUST** have an income at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level to be eligible for the Fresh Start Program. Review the chart below to determine applicant's income status. [Click here](#) for more information.

Persons in Family Unit	Federal Poverty Level (FPL) Monthly	ARRA Monthly Income Limit (300% of FPL)	ARRA Annual Income Limit (300% of FPL)
1	\$903	\$2,709	\$32,508
2	\$1,215	\$3,645	\$43,740
3	\$1,526	\$4,578	\$54,936
4	\$1,838	\$5,514	\$66,168
5	\$2,150	\$6,450	\$77,400
6	\$2,461	\$7,383	\$88,596
7	\$2,773	\$8,319	\$99,828
8	\$3,085	\$9,255	\$111,060
For each additional person, add	\$312	\$936	\$11,232



8. How is the total gross income calculated?

The total gross income, both earned and unearned, shall be counted using TANF conversion formulas. This includes all income which is received or expected to be received during the 30 day budget period when determining financial need.

9. What is the maximum amount of funding provided?

The maximum amount of funding provided per application is \$3,000.

10. What **MUST** an applicant in need of housing assistance provide?

The applicant **MUST** have **AT LEAST ONE** of the following forms of documentation in the applicant's name:

- pre-foreclosure notice
- demand for possession
- dispossessory
- eviction notice (For rental properties eviction notices must be received within 90 days)
- late notice

11. What must an applicant in need of utility assistance provide?

The applicant must provide a past due or shut-off notice for utilities (or have already had their utilities turned off) that's in the applicant's name.

12. How many applications can be submitted?

Only one application per address can be submitted.

13. Can commercial entities apply?

No, only individual residences are eligible for the program.

14. Can applicants request assistance for both housing and utilities?

Yes, both types of funding can be requested on the same application.

15. How should an applicant apply?

To apply, applicants should visit [unitedwayatlanta.org](http://unitedwayatlanta.org) for a listing of participating Fresh Start agencies, or if in the metro Atlanta area, dial 2-1-1 from any phone with the following area codes: (404), (770) or (678).

16. What is United Way 2-1-1?

United Way 2-1-1 provides information and referral services to residents across metro Atlanta. Calls for assistance with food, rent and utilities, child care and other basic and urgent needs are answered 24 hours, 7 days a week.

17. To whom will the payment be made?

All payments will be made directly to reputable, qualified vendors (i.e., gas, utility and mortgage lenders)

18. Who is included in the Assistance Group?

The Fresh Start Program Assistance Group includes all residents in the homes who will directly benefit from the Fresh Start Program service. The Assistance Group must include a minor child (under 18) who is related to the applicant.

**EXCEPTION:** An applicant who is a current participant in the Fatherhood Program may apply for Fresh Start assistance even if he has no minor child living with him.

19. Who cannot be included in the Assistance Group?

Individuals who cannot be members of the Assistance Group are an ineligible child or an ineligible parent. Refer to list of eligibility requirements that **MUST** be met in order to be included in the Assistance Group.

20. What is representative income?

Representative income is the amount of income that best represents what the Assistance Group can be expected to receive in the future. The established representative income will then be converted to a monthly amount.

21. What is the Georgia Fatherhood Program?

The Georgia Fatherhood Program works with non-custodial parents who owe child support through the Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) but who are unable to pay. DCSS partners with other government and community agencies to help Fatherhood Program participants obtain employment, enabling them to pay the child support their children need.

22. What qualifies as a legitimate child?

The degree of relationship between an applicant for Fresh Start and the minor child living in the home follows TANF relationship policy. The following relationships meet the relationship requirement:

- Parent
- Grandparent, up to three greats
- Sibling, including half-, whole or step-sibling
- Aunt or uncle up to two greats
- Niece or nephew
- First cousin
- First cousin once removed (the child of a first cousin)
- Spouse of any of the above (e.g., stepparent) even after the marriage is terminated by death or divorce, unless the child is born after the termination of the marriage
- Legal guardian (but not legal custody). Must be verified with legal guardianship documents.

23. What sources can be used to verify a dependent minor's age?

The following sources can be used to determine age:

- birth certificate
- affidavit of persons present at the birth
- adoption record
- baptismal or other church record
- census record
- court record
- driver's license
- family Bible
- insurance record
- marriage record
- medical record

- school record
- social security record
- U.S. passport
- vital statistic record
- any record showing age or date of birth

24. What if an applicant does not have or cannot find their Social Security Number (SSN)?

An applicant who does not have a SSN or who does not know the number must apply for a SSN. Refer the applicant to the SSA webpage (<http://www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.html>) to apply for an SSN. The SSA website will provide your client with all of the information they will need in order to apply for an SSN. The applicant must provide original documents or certified copies to SSA. No photocopies or notarized copies of needed documents are allowed.

25. Which documents can be used to verify an applicant's citizenship?

The following documents can be used to verify an applicant's citizenship:

- Birth certificate
- Certificate of Citizenship (N- 560, N-561 or N-600)
- Naturalization Certificate (N-550) (N-570)
- Report of Birth Abroad of U.S. Citizen (Form FS-240, FS 545, DS 1350)
- U.S. Citizen I.D. card (I-197)
- U.S. Passport
- Consular Report of Birth
- American Indian card (I-872)
- Northern Marianas Primary I.D. card (I-873), issued prior to 1986 to applicants born prior to 11/3/86
- Social Security Number if issued prior to 6/30/48

26. What classifies as a "qualified alien"?

A "qualified alien" is a non-citizen who is a lawful, permanent resident of the U.S. A qualified alien is potentially eligible for ARRA Fresh Start assistance **IF** classified as one of the following:

- an asylee under section 208 of the Immigration and Naturalization Act (INA)
- a refugee under section 207 of the INA
- a victim of a severe form of trafficking who has been granted refugee status
- an alien whose deportation is being withheld under section 243(h)
- a Cuban or Haitian entrant
- an Amerasian (i.e., has an American father and an Asian mother)
- an alien who is a veteran with an honorable discharge who served a minimum of 24 months in the U.S. Armed Forces, or the veteran's spouse or unmarried dependent child an alien who is on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, or that individual's spouse or unmarried dependent child