



# COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### RENT RELIEF PROGRAM LAUNCHES

Renters and landlords throughout Santa Cruz County are eligible for more than \$16 million in federal funds available to local renters unable to pay their rent and utilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To be distributed based on need, the funds are available to low-income renters and landlords impacted by the pandemic to help with rent, utilities and home energy costs, rent and utilities arrears, and related housing costs for eligible participants. Renters with household income at or below 80 percent of area median income are eligible, with priority for households at or below 50 percent of area median income.

An online application will be posted today. To apply or verify eligibility, visit [HousingIsKey.com](https://HousingIsKey.com). Assistance is also available by calling 1-833-430-2122 between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. daily. Applications and assistance are available in multiple languages.

Several trusted local partners have been selected to assist tenants and landlords through the applications process, including Community Bridges, Community Action Board, Families in Transition, California Rural Legal Assistance and United Way 211. Communities Organized for Relational Power in Action (COPA) and the Conflict Resolution Center (CRC) will also be providing public outreach and education about the program. Further details about local assistance will be released soon.

Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, \$25 billion is available nationwide for emergency rent support. Renter households must also include at least one individual who qualifies for unemployment or has experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant costs, or experienced a financial hardship due to COVID-19, or demonstrates a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

Landlords agreeing to participate may receive payment of 80 percent of rental arrears incurred by their program-eligible tenants during the period between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021, and must accept the amount as payment in full. Tenants with landlords declining to participate are still eligible to receive up to 25 percent of back rent owed.