



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Chair and Members of the Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Barry A. Burton, County Administrator

SUBJECT: Pinellas CARES Financial Assistance

DATE: April 24, 2020

In March 2020 the United States began to see an increase in the incidence of Coronavirus disease (COVID19). In response, a national state of emergency was declared, and Pinellas County followed with declaration of local state of emergency on March 13, 2020. With the mounting economic impact resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic, Congress enacted the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act).

On April 16, the Board passed a resolution to design an expanded assistance program for individual and families that were directly impacted by loss of income due to the COVID 19 health emergency. In alignment with Resolution No. 20-29, County staff have explored local programs and opportunities to expand on existing infrastructure to quickly provide assistance to the community. Pinellas County seeks to implement the ***Pinellas CARES Financial Assistance*** Program to help stabilize individuals and families that have been impacted by loss of income due to the COVID-19 health emergency.

The program leverages existing assistance infrastructure designed by Humans Services in partnership with 2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares (2-1-1) to provide one-time CARES Act assistance for affected residents to help bridge financial gaps for overdue rent, mortgage payments, utilities and other critical needs.

Proven eligibility criteria for the program include:

1) US Citizenship, naturalized citizen, legal permanent resident, 2) Pinellas County resident, 3) loss of income due to COVID-19 employment impacts: verification will include but not limited to: documentation of paystubs, letter from employer and/or notice of application for unemployment, or verification of employer closure, 4) remaining income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, and 5) less than \$4000.00 in liquid assets in the applicant's checking and savings accounts.

Under the process, residents will be able to call or text 2-1-1 to request assistance. 2-1-1 staff or volunteers gather eligibility information to assist with preliminary screening and help facilitate the documentation process. Cases remain pending while documentation is outstanding and submitted for review once complete. When a favorable determination is made, the resident is contacted and financial assistance is paid directly to the landlord, mortgage holder, utilities company, or other service creditor.

For Pinellas CARES Financial Assistance, the funds will be coordinated as a separate assistance pool related to COVID-19 for tracking and reporting purposes. In addition, Human Services and Community Development have identified staff to assist 2-1-1 with screening to help address anticipated volume. The County has not discussed or identified additional administrative fees related to 2-1-1's services. These fees may be negotiated prior to program implementation.