

HARDSHIP POLICY- ALTERNATIVE REEXAMINATION SCHEDULE FOR HOUSEHOLDS

This Moving to Work (MTW) activity allows the agency to establish an alternative reexamination schedule including placing a limit on the number of interim reexaminations between regular reexaminations.

The AHA is limiting households to one interim per calendar year if the household gross income has decreased by 10% or more.

If a household would like to receive an interim for an income decrease of less than 10% or has already received an interim in the calendar and would like a second interim, the household may submit a hardship request if:

- The family has experienced a decrease in income because of changed circumstances, including loss or reduction of employment, death in the family, or reduction in or loss of earnings other assistance; OR
- The family has experienced an increase in expenses, because of changed circumstances, for medical costs, childcare, transportation, education, or similar items.

Requested a Hardship

To qualify for a hardship exemption, a family must submit a request through the agency's online form located on the AHA's website (<https://www.alamedahsg.org/housing-programs/program-forms/>) or by filling out a paper copy (<https://www.alamedahsg.org/housing-programs/program-forms/>) and emailing it to hardshiprequest@alamedahsg.org. A paper request may be submitted at the Agency's offices, but it will be scanned and e-mailed to this address for tracking purposes. The request must explain the nature of the hardship and how the hardship has affected the family's ability to pay rent. If the family is claiming to be facing eviction, they must submit a copy of a Termination of Tenancy, the eviction notice or a self-certification, signed under penalty of perjury, along with the hardship request. If the family submits a self-certification that the family is facing eviction, the Agency may verify that with the landlord.

Determination of Hardship

When a family requests a financial hardship exemption, the AHA will review the request within 5 business days to determine whether the household is eligible for a hardship based on the information provided. If the AHA needs additional information, the household has 7 business days from the AHA's request for information to provide all of the information required. The AHA has 3 business days to make an eligibility determination. If the AHA requests information from the family and it is not received within the 7 business days after the request was made, the AHA may deny the request.

If the AHA determines that the request does not meet the definition of a hardship as outlined in this policy, the agency will notify the household. Please refer to the "Grievance Procedure" below for household's available next steps in this circumstance.

If the AHA determines that the request does meet the definition of a hardship as outlined in this policy, the agency must suspend the MTW activity while the request is being processed. This means the AHA will conduct a reexamination and recalculate the family's portion of rent based on current circumstances until the final determination of the hardship is determined.

During this suspension, the AHA will determine whether the financial hardship exists and whether the hardship is temporary or long-term. AHA defines temporary hardship as a hardship expected to last 90 days or less. Long-term hardship is defined as a hardship expected to last more than 90 days.

AHA will determine the nature of the hardship within 30 calendar days of the request being received. If the AHA requests information from the family and it is not received within the 30 days after the original request was made, the AHA may deny the request and require the family to repay the additional assistance paid during the suspension of the MTW activity period.

No Financial Hardship

If AHA determines there is a minimal or no financial hardship, AHA will reinstate the family's previously calculated share and require the family to repay the additional assistance paid during the suspension of the MTW activity period.

AHA will require the family to repay the suspended amount within 30 calendar days of AHA's notice that a hardship exemption has not been granted.

Temporary Hardship

If AHA determines that a qualifying financial hardship is temporary, AHA must suspend the MTW activity for the 90-day period beginning the first of the month following the date of the family's request for a hardship exemption.

At the end of the 90-day suspension period, the family must resume payment of their portion of the rent as previously determined by the AHA and must repay the AHA the amounts suspended. This repayment, upon request of the household, will be subject to a repayment plan under the AHA's repayment agreement policies if eligible.

Long-Term Hardship

If AHA determines that the financial hardship is long-term, AHA must exempt the family from the MTW activity for so long as the hardship continues. The exemption will apply from the first of the month following the family's request until the later of the end of the qualifying hardship event or the family's next regularly scheduled reexamination. When the financial hardship has been determined to be long-term, the family is not required to repay the additional subsidy paid under the hardship.

Grievance procedure:

The family may request a second level review of the denied hardship request by submitting a written appeal to hardshiprequest@alamedahsg.org. This appeal should contain any information the family would like to be taken into account during the appeal review including why the family believes the incorrect determination was made. The appeal will be reviewed by a different staff member than the one that made the original determination. Also, any staff reporting to the staff member making the original denial will be ineligible to review the appeal request. The appeal will be reviewed and responded to within 14 days of receipt of the appeal.

If the second review results in the same decision as the original request, the family may request an Informal Hearing according to the AHA's Informal Hearing procedures.