

BLOOMINGTON TOWNSHIP ASSISTANCE PROCESS – HELPFUL TIPS

Township Assistance Guidelines and Eligibility:

Our local guidelines, eligibility criteria, and maximum assistance amounts are updated annually by our advisory board, based on state code that charges townships with “providing temporary relief in emergency situations when a township resident has exhausted other means of relief”.

- Applicant does need to be named on the lease or mortgage, and all members of the household over 18 (and any cosigners or guarantors) must participate in the application and appointment process.
- Applicant must be employed f/t, or seeking employment, or medically exempt (other exceptions are often made, as well)
- Applicant must be seeking assistance from any and all public assistance programs for which they may be eligible; as well as seeking assistance from family (examples include applying to Section 8 instead of maintaining high rent burden, applying for state’s energy assistance program before requesting help with utility bills from township, filing for child support when appropriate).
- Federal Poverty Levels have been adopted as income guidelines.
- Maximum Monthly Assistance Amounts are \$900/1 individual, and an additional \$200 for each household member up to 8 maximum in household.
- Cannot assist with deposits, late fees, miscellaneous fees.

What township do I live in? Type address into <https://in.wayeo.us/> and use top-right drop-down menu to go to “Township”.

Application Process:

Contacting our office via phone or in-person is the first step, and this should not be done until the emergency exists (not in anticipation of one weeks/months ahead of time). The applicant will be asked some basic questions regarding their situation, will be given an appointment date and time, and assigned a case coordinator. They will be instructed on filling out the application either online or in paper form, and given a checklist of documents needed for the appointment. Please note – the application and checklist can be e-mailed to others who may be helping with the process, as well (ie case managers). These are also available on our website.

Tips for this stage (from case coordinators):

1. Fill out the application the day before or a couple of days before your appointment. This ensures up-to-date information. If a household begins an application but their appt isn't for another 3 weeks, information on the application may not be as accurate by that time.
2. Allow 30-60 minutes of uninterrupted time to fill out the application.
3. If completing the online application or the paper application, fill out everything to the best of your ability, skip over anything you're not sure about, and don't hesitate to call the office before the appt date to ask any questions (compile a list of all your questions so that they can all be answered within the one phone call if possible vs making multiple calls to the office for questions you think of as you review the application).
4. If a paper application, write legibly. If online application, double check typed in information is correct.
6. If unable to complete the application, ask us for help! That's what we're here for. We can provide assistance or accommodations as needed.

Gathering Documentation for Your Appointment:

1. Read the document checklist and any other information provided to you (such as the email containing the document checklist) thoroughly and carefully as soon as it is received.
2. Start gathering documents as soon as you receive the document checklist. Statements for any financial apps or account will need to be printed off or downloaded; or screenshots when this is not possible. This may require some extra time if you've not had to do this before. Customer service reps at these companies can assist. There are also centers in our community who can help such as the library, or BHA's Community Center.
3. Excluding the DL/State ID and/or registration, which should be with you or in your vehicle at all times, gather the remaining documents and place them together (paper clipped together or in an organized folder).
4. Do not assume you have all of the needed information already gathered based on other agencies' processes. For example, if you have gathered similar documents for another agency (like FSSA) and have those documents in a folder already, this is likely not sufficient for the township appt. Applicants should be reviewing the provided document checklist and gathering all necessary paperwork as stated on the checklist.
5. If you work with another agency (Help at Home, Area 10, Centerstone, Family Solutions, etc...) ask to use one of your appointments for the purpose of collecting necessary paperwork. If

you are printing documents for the appt or emailing documents, ask for assistance with this as well, if needed.

6. Do not arrive for an appointment and say that you have all of your documents online or on your phone. This is preparation that needs to be done in advance, and this can negatively impact the process. Documents should either be printed or emailed at the time of the appointment at the latest, if not sooner. Please note we cannot open zip files sent by e-mail.

8. If there is documentation required but you are not sure how to obtain it, contact the Trustee's Office weeks/days before the appointment date to get those questions answered.

9. Pay attention to transaction history needed. If it is something you have that can hold, receive, send, or transfer funds, it must be provided even if it has not been used recently or if the balance is at \$0 (ie Venmo, Chime, Cashapp, sports betting accounts, utility allotment debit cards, etc.)

10. Please note that documents submitted to us become part of a client file, and are not available to the client or to the public once filed.

Appointment time:

1. Read the document checklist for the list of appt rules and read any other information provided to you (such as the email containing the document checklist) thoroughly and carefully one more time.

2. Be sure that all adult household members are able to be present for the scheduled appointment time.

3. Be sure to arrive 10-15 minutes early to check in, share your documents with the front desk, and be ready for your appointment.

4. If you have other appointments scheduled that same day (doctor's appts, job interviews) or have something that needs to be done that will disrupt the allotted time of your township appointment (such as picking up kids from school), consider rescheduling your appointment as soon as you are aware of any conflicts. Please do not wait until the day of your appointment to inform township staff that you must leave in 30 minutes for a job interview.

5. If you are not sure about something listed on the document checklist regarding the rules of the appointment (such as who should be present for the appt), call the office well before the scheduled appt date.

6. You will receive text reminders of your appointment the week before and the day before the appt. Please respond to the text messages as prompted to confirm or cancel your appointment.

7. If you need to inform your landlord/mortgage company and/or utility companies of your township appointment, please do so. Do not assume the township staff will contact any agency to inform them of your appt time. Some landlords will not accept “partial payments” or outside payments.

8. Be open and honest with your assistance coordinator as much as possible. For one, false information is often rooted out in the investigative work of confirming information on the application, and can be a reason for denial of assistance.

There are many reasons the state guides us to deny assistance (wasted resources, turning down gainful employment, missing documentation, over income guidelines, among others), but exceptions can be made based on health and safety. Ultimately, we try to confirm the emergency need of the applicant and ensure that people stay safely housed and able to care for themselves and their families with our help. Sometimes a determination is made that we are not the best place to help and we will make referrals that are more appropriate.

We recognize that people come to us for help in times of crisis, and we recognize that this process can be stressful or intimidating for many people, especially in times of crisis. We work hard to make the process as easy and stress-free as possible, and appreciate when someone communicates to us what else would make the process less stress-filled for them.