

County distributed \$31 million in housing, utility assistance to residents



Home lives were upended for many Montgomery County residents the moment the May 2019 storms hit, but the impact lasted for months and sometimes years.



Many Montgomery County residents needed aid after the May 2019 tornadoes ravaged the area.



Public Health Dayton & Montgomery County worked to support residents who needed assistance after the May 2019 tornadoes.

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Montgomery County residents saw unprecedented challenges in the last three years that affected their ability to maintain safe housing.

There were over 3,800 single-family units and more than 1,000 multi-family dwellings impacted by the 2019 Memorial Day tornadoes in Montgomery County alone.

Much of that damage was felt by low-income families.

They also felt the challenges presented by COVID-19 and rising housing costs.

In the first year of the pandemic, the county distributed \$6.8 million in mortgage and rental assistance to 1,945 households with federal funding through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

The county also distributed substantial utility assistance through CARES money. More than 16,400 households received bill credits for either Dayton Power and Light (now AES Ohio) or Vectren, totaling \$6,041,739 in assistance.

Montgomery County continued to help citizens by administering funding the federal government provided to address housing instability after all CARES funds were exhausted.

“There is a high occupancy rate, reduced inventory, inflation and rising rent costs,” said Tawana Jones, Community and Economic Development (CED) Operations Manager. “It is certainly making things tougher for households with lower incomes. To help relieve some of that pressure, families can receive up to 12 months of back rent through the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program and three months of future rent.

Some households have only received future rent.”

Through the coordination of Montgomery County Business Services-CED, over 4,400 households have received a total of \$18 million in Emergency Rental Assistance since the program started in April of 2021.

The average eligible household received about \$3,500.

With about 2,500 applications still pending, the County is no longer accepting new ERA applications.

“It was so critical for families to receive this money, especially those with small children,” said Carolyn Rice, Montgomery County Commission President.

“That is a tremendous trauma for a child to be removed from the comfort of their home. Obviously, the uncertainty is difficult for everyone in the home, so I’m very pleased that our CED team put together such a great network of partners to help us address this problem.”

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, which includes funds for the first iteration of ERA, provided Montgomery County with \$15.8 million. This federal funding was only available to communities with more than 500,000 people, with larger allocations going to larger counties. To access these funds, residents had to show they were impacted by COVID-19, such as having contracted COVID-19, working with a business that shut down due to the pandemic, or they were affected by childcare being unavailable.

Under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) that President Biden signed into law, Montgomery County was eligible for an additional \$12.6 million. With this second version of ERA, applicants did not have to show COVID impact, but prove they had fallen behind in their housing payments during COVID-19.

“A program like ERA is not just good for renters, it benefits landlords as well,” Rice said. “There are so many mom-and-pop landlords that have a mortgage on their rental properties, so when their tenants have financial issues, they have problems with paying for their buildings.

We have to do what we can to avoid evictions for the good of our entire community.”

One key partner was the city of Kettering, which worked with Kettering Municipal Court to prevent evictions through their Stay Put Program, an extension of the county’s ERA. Residents submit their ID, a copy of their lease and income verification.

Landlords also provide information, and when eligibility is determined, the city will provide an agreement to cover rent with the ERA funds.

Most of the applications utilized United Way's Help- Link211, which would document basic information and then assign a case manager.

Montgomery County also worked with local nonprofit partners, including the Salvation Army Dayton Kroc Center, Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley, Goodwill Easter Seals of the Miami Valley, Homefull and Greater Dayton Premier Management.

"It has been important for us to serve as many people as we can," Jones said. "We know there are people who have been waiting for assistance from us. We will continue processing applications as long as the rental assistance need exists and as long as we still have funding to meet that need."