

COVID-19 Extreme Hardship Support Program

Frequently asked questions for the Victorian community

Updated July 2021

What is the Extreme Hardship Support Program?

The Extreme Hardship Support Program provides emergency financial assistance to people who are not eligible for Commonwealth Government income support. It is for people on temporary and provisional visas and undocumented migrants. It is available if you have zero or very limited savings, income or community support to help pay for food, medicine and bills during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

It is Victorian Government assistance, delivered by Red Cross.

Who can apply?

To apply, you must:

- live in Victoria, AND
- not be eligible to receive income from the Commonwealth Government (such as JobSeeker or the Temporary COVID Disaster Payment), AND
- have zero to very limited income, savings or community support, AND
- be a temporary or provisional visa holder, or an undocumented migrant.

I am an international student. Can I apply?

Yes. From 1 January 2021, all international students experiencing financial hardship can apply, even if you previously received assistance through the International Student Emergency Relief Fund.

How do I apply?

Before you start your application, you will need:

- evidence of your current or most recent visa status, such as your passport number, visa grant number or Immi card number
- evidence of your financial hardship, including all current bank statements
- an email address
- your bank account details (BSB and account number).

Apply at the [Red Cross website](http://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/help-for-migrants-in-transition/help-for-migrants-in-transition/vic-relief) <www.redcross.org.au/get-help/help-for-migrants-in-transition/help-for-migrants-in-transition/vic-relief>

If you are worried that you do not have the right documents or need assistance with your online application, please call Red Cross on **1800 855 240**.

When can I apply?

You can apply anytime. If you need help, apply as soon as you can. The program is available to assist people experiencing hardship due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Is assistance available in my language?

Yes. You can ask the Red Cross to call you back with an interpreter in any language.

The website also includes information in [Chinese \(Simplified\)](#), [Farsi](#), [Malay](#), [Nepali](#), [Spanish](#), [Tamil](#), [Urdu](#) and [Vietnamese](#).

What if I need help to apply?

Call the Red Cross on **1800 855 240** if you need help with your application. Red Cross can call you back with an interpreter in your language.

Does it cost anything to make an application?

No. Applying is free. You should not pay anyone to help you apply.

How much money can I receive? Why are people receiving different amounts?

Single people usually receive \$800. Families receive more, based on the number of people in your household.

If you are still experiencing financial hardship after two months, you may be eligible for an additional payment.

How do you decide if I am in extreme financial hardship?

To be eligible you must have zero or very limited savings, income or community support. For example, you may be eligible if you do not have enough savings to pay for upcoming rent or bills. Talk to Red Cross if you are not sure whether you are eligible.

Can I apply more than once?

If you are still experiencing financial hardship two months after you received a payment, you can apply for an additional payment.

When and how will I be paid?

If you are eligible, you will receive a payment into your bank account. If you do not have a bank account, call the Red Cross on **1800 855 240** to talk about a different way to receive the payment.

Payments may take longer if the application is not complete, including copies of all your current bank statements. Red Cross will contact you if they need more information.

What other supports are available to me?

Other supports include help with rent, family violence, and mental health. For a list of current supports go to the [Red Cross website](#) at www.redcross.org.au/vicrelief.

What supports are available related to coronavirus (COVID-19)?

If you suspect you may have coronavirus (COVID-19), call the Victorian Government's dedicated hotline on **1800 675 398**. The hotline is open 24 hours, 7 days. If you need an interpreter, call **131 450** first.

You can get a free test for coronavirus (COVID-19) regardless of your Medicare or visa status.

You can also apply for a \$450 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Test Isolation Payment if you miss work while you self-isolate and wait for the results of your test. Visit [our website](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/employee-isolation-payment-covid-19) for more information <<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/employee-isolation-payment-covid-19>>.

You can also receive the \$1500 Pandemic Leave Payment if you have coronavirus (COVID-19) or are a close contact or carer of someone who does, and you are unable to earn an income because of it. Visit [Services Australia](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/news/pandemic-leave-payment-if-you-live-victoria) <<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/news/pandemic-leave-payment-if-you-live-victoria>> for more information. This payment is only for people with work rights in Australia.

You can still receive the emergency payment from the Red Cross if you have received the Test Isolation Payment or the Pandemic Leave Payment. This is because these payments are temporary payments and not ongoing income support.

Do I need to have tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) to be eligible for this program?

No. You do not need to have coronavirus (COVID-19) to receive the Extreme Hardship Support payment. The payment is for emergency financial support. For example, because you have lost your job.

I don't live in Victoria. Can I apply?

No. This program is only for people living in Victoria.

What if I don't have the right visa documents?

You may still be able to receive help. This program is for people on a range of temporary and provisional visas, including people with expired visas. If you do not have the right visa documents, Red Cross will talk with you privately about other ways to prove your eligibility.

Your privacy is protected under law. Red Cross does not share personal or visa information with the government.

I have already received a payment from Red Cross or another community organisation to meet my urgent needs. Am I eligible for this payment as well?

Yes, you can apply for assistance through this program.

I am eligible for income support (such as from Centrelink – JobSeeker) but have not applied because it may affect my visa or my sponsor. Am I eligible for this payment as well?

No, this program is for people who are not eligible to access any income support. This includes JobSeeker, the Temporary COVID Disaster Payment, other Services Australia payments, and Status Resolution Support Services payments.

If my application is unsuccessful or not enough to meet my needs, how else can I access financial support?

The [Red Cross website](https://www.redcross.org.au/vicrelief) <<https://www.redcross.org.au/vicrelief>> also provides information about other supports for people living in Victoria on temporary visas.

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 1300 651 160, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email Emergency Management Communications <DFFHCovidComms@dffh.vic.gov.au>.

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Available at Victoria's coronavirus website <<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/financial-and-other-support-coronavirus-covid-19>>