
**DEPARTMENT
POLICY**

Applicants must complete and sign one of the following applications in order to apply for State Emergency Relief (SER):

- DHS-1514, Application for State Emergency Relief.
- MDHHS-1171, Assistance Application, and the MDHHS-1171-SER, State Emergency Relief (SER) supplemental form.
- A MI Bridges online application in which a SER service has been requested.

Applicants may file an application for SER in any county in Michigan. An application submitted through MI Bridges for a SER covered service is considered a complete application, no additional application is required. Incomplete applications may be filed, but must be completed before authorizing SER.

An MDHHS-1171, Assistance Application, is considered an application for SER if the client indicates they are applying for State Emergency Relief and the minimum information is provided, even if the MDHHS-1171-SER supplement has not been submitted. In instances where the MDHHS-1171-SER supplement is not received by the department, it should be requested from the client or completed during an interview. Any person has the right to apply for an SER. Authorized representatives may apply on behalf of a person who is deceased, physically or mentally disabled, or a minor. Obtain written permission from all other applicants designating an authorized representative outside the SER group.

Obtain all supporting verifications and applicant signatures. The signature(s) establishes that clients understand their rights and responsibilities and that they prepared the application(s) truthfully under penalty of perjury. Applications may be transferred between counties if it is in the best interest of the applicant. Both counties must mutually agree to the transfer.

Age

There is no minimum age requirement to apply for SER; however, if the applicant is an unemancipated minor, we must refer him/her to children's services for further evaluation.

Note: Do not delay processing the SER application pending the evaluation by services staff.

Burial Applications

An application for burial services must be made no later than 20 business days after the burial, cremation or donation takes place. Any person who has the legal right to claim the body may be the authorized representative; see ERM 306, Burials.

APPLICATION REGISTRATION

Applications must be registered within one day of receipt. Online applications will be sent electronically to a registration inbox for proper assignment. Emailed applications are not acceptable.

Accept and register a SER application if the following information is provided:

- Applicant name.
- Address or statement of homelessness.
- Birthdate.
- Applicant's or authorized representative's signature.

APPLICATION DATE

Requests for SER become an application on the day the application is received by the Department. For electronic applications submitted through MI Bridges, the application date is determined based on the time and date of submission. Any application submitted after 5:00 pm or on a non-business day will have an application date of the next business day.

The application date is the first day of the 30-day SER eligibility period. If the application is approved, the 30-day eligibility period does not change regardless of how many service requests the client may make during that period. If the application is denied and the client reapplies, a new 30-day period will start with the new application date.

If additional SER services are requested during the approved 30-day eligibility period, a new application is not needed and the application date cannot be changed. Every additional request made during the approved 30-day eligibility period is entered into Bridges as

an additional SER service request and is subject to the original 30-day eligibility period.

Example: Client applies for assistance with an electric shut-off on 4/1 and is approved. This establishes a 30-day SER eligibility period of 4/1-4/30. On 4/25, the client requests an additional SER service for a natural gas shut-off. The client's shut off exceeds the fiscal year cap resulting in a copay. Because the client has requested the additional service during the 4/1-4/30 eligibility period, this request is subject to that period. The client only has until 4/30 to provide proof of the copay made for the 4/25 request.

ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

Budget

Complete a SER budget in Bridges for each request/application; see ERM 208 for budget procedures. Bridges calculates payment maximums, required payments, income and asset copayment, client contributions, etc. based on the information entered from the SER application and determines eligibility or ineligibility for SER. Bridges electronically stores the budget; therefore, it is not necessary to place a printed copy of the budget in the case record; see ERM 208, Budget Procedures.

Approval

Certain conditions must be met before SER can be issued to help individuals and families whose health and safety are threatened:

- Prior written or oral approval must be given by an authorized department staff person before SER issuance.
- **Do not issue SER to reimburse expenses incurred or paid without prior department approval.**
- The SER payment must resolve the emergency.
- The group must meet all applicable policy requirements for the SER service.

Case Documentation

- Case comments must be entered to support SER processing.

- Minimum documentation should include:
 - SER service requested.
 - Interview status (whether completed).
 - Clearances completed: SOLQ, CI, and address.
 - Household size (group composition).
 - Income for household members used in determining eligibility.
 - Assets.
 - Clarification of discrepancies between application and current Bridges information.
 - Approval or denial of application.

Example: SER application 9/17/2024 for heat with DTE. No interview needed, active FAP benefits. SOLQ and CI pulled and reviewed. Address clearance completed; no companions found. Client and two children in home. Client working, income has not changed since FAP app. No change in assets reported, under \$15K. SER approved; commitment entered on DTE portal.

Prior Approval

After-Hours Emergency

Immediate action may be necessary to prevent harm to SER group members when an emergency arises after hours or on weekends. The prior approval requirement may be waived in any case when the emergency occurred while department offices were closed.

The first-line manager may approve a waiver of the prior approval requirement in non-burial cases, provided a SER application is filed within five business days from the date the emergency began.

DHS-1419, Decision Notice

Inform all SER applicants in writing of the decision made on their application. Mail or give the DHS-1419, Decision Notice, to the applicant. The notice must also be provided whenever a client withdraws their application.

Note: Applications that have been pseudo certified may only be withdrawn in Bridges to reprocess an incorrect eligibility determination.

Proof of Payment

If the SER group meets all eligibility criteria but has an income or asset copayment, shortfall, and/or contribution, do not issue payment until the client provides proof that their payment has been made. If another agency is making the payment, proof that payment will be made is required. Verification of payment must be received in the local office within the 30-day eligibility period or no SER payment will be made, and the client must reapply. Use the DHS-1419, Decision Notice, to inform the SER group of the amount they must pay and the due date for returning proof of their payment.

Energy Services

Example: For energy services, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) payment is not reduced when another agency is paying the client's current balance or arrearages, in addition to the copay, as long as the additional payment results in a zero-account balance. Verify the payments and account balance with the energy provider. A client has an account balance of \$1150 and a shut off notice for \$900. MDHHS energy cap is \$600 therefore the client copay is the \$300 over cap amount. A community agency is willing to pay the client copay amount and \$250 to get the bill current for a total payment of \$550. The MDHHS payment of \$600 would not be reduced.

If the agency had paid \$100 toward the need, the MDHHS would be reduced since the extra contribution was not enough to bring the total account balance to zero.

Anytime the copay is not made by another agency, the MDHHS payment is reduced.

Application Denial

If the copayment, shortfall, contribution or combination exceeds the need, the application shall be denied unless good cause is granted.

INTERVIEW REQUIREMENTS

All Applicants

An interview is only required when:

- The household reports changes or there are discrepancies that must be resolved to process the application, or
- The household has no other active MDHHS programs that require an interview.

An interview is not required before denying assistance when the application or other available information clearly shows the group is ineligible.

When an interview is needed, attempt to complete it by phone. If the call is unsuccessful, schedule the interview in Bridges promptly to meet SOP timeframes.

Exception: If the group is ineligible or refuses to cooperate in the application process, including failure to complete the required interview, certify the denial within SOP to avoid overdue tasks. Use “Other” as the denial reason and document on the DHS-1419: “SER application has been denied for failure to complete the required interview per ERM 103.” An interview is not required for an application for an unclaimed body.

Note: An interview guide does not need to be completed if case comments are entered when completing an interview.

Standard of Promptness

Give priority to SER applicants when there is a direct threat to health or safety requiring immediate attention.

The SER standard of promptness is **10 business days**, beginning with the date the signed SER application is received in the local office. The case record must include documentation for any delay in processing the application beyond the standard of promptness.

- Do not use the standard of promptness as a basis for denial of SER applications.

- Continue to pend an application if the SER group is cooperating within their ability to provide verifications.
- Deny the application if the group does not cooperate.

Note: The case record must include documentation for any delay in processing the application beyond the standard of promptness.

VERIFICATION

Clients must be informed of all verifications that are required and where to return verifications. The due date is **eight calendar days**, which begins on the date the DHS-3503, SER Verification Checklist is generated.

Example: A SER application is received on July 1st, the specialist generates a DHS-3503, SER Verification Checklist on July 2nd, the verification due date would be July 9th as July 2nd is considered the first day of the eight calendar day calculation.

Note: When the eighth day falls on a state-observed holiday, the due date for verifications to be returned will be extended to the following business day.

Use the DHS-3503, SER Verification Checklist, to request verification and to notify the client of the due date for returning the verifications.

The client must make a reasonable effort to obtain required verifications. The specialist must assist if the applicant needs and requests help. If neither the client nor the specialist can obtain the verifications despite a reasonable effort, use the best available information. If no evidence is available, the specialist must use their best judgment.

Verifications are considered timely if received by the date they are due. For electronically transmitted verifications (fax, email or MI Bridges document upload), the date of the transmission is the receipt date. Verifications that are submitted after the close of regular business hours through the drop box or by delivery of a MDHHS representative are considered received the next business day.

Identity

The client's identity must be verified. If an authorized representative (AR) applies on behalf of a group, the AR must verify his own **and** the client's identity.

Note: Documents used to verify identity may be originals or copies of the original document. Facsimiles are acceptable documents for identity.

The following are examples of acceptable verification of identity:

- Driver's license.
- State-issued identification.
- School-issued identification.
- Individual SSN has been validated by SSA in Bridges.
- Document indicating a client's receipt of benefits under a program which requires verification of identity (SSI, RSDI).
- Identification for health benefits.
- Voter registration card.
- Birth certificate/record.
- U.S. military card or draft record.
- U.S. passport.
- Certificate of Naturalization (Department of Homeland Security (DHS) forms N-550 or N-570).
- Certificate of U.S. citizenship (DHS forms N-560 or N-561).
- Military dependent's identification card.
- Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood, or other U.S. American Indian/Alaska native tribal document.
- U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner card.

LEGAL BASE

Mich Admin Code, R 400.7001 et seq.