

Wisconsin households get \$35.8 million in rental assistance funds so far this year

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— Wisconsin households have received \$35.8 million in federal rental assistance funds since the beginning of the year, according to the latest figures from the U.S. Treasury Department.

Between January and March of this year, 3,674 households in the state received \$9.1 million in assistance from the Emergency Rental Assistance fund. In April, 2,482 households got a total of \$9.3 million. In May, 2,347 households received \$8.5 million, and in June, \$8.9 million went to 2,314 households in Wisconsin.

In total, 10,817 households in the state have been assisted through the federal program so far this year. The ERA program provides funding to households that are struggling to pay rent or utilities. Tenants can apply directly for the funding, and landlords can also apply on behalf of their tenants.

While funds distributed in Wisconsin have been relatively consistent for the past three months, the number of households on the national level receiving assistance and the total dollar amount provided both increased dramatically in June.

“If you’re not seeing an increase month-over-month on the state level, one reason is the state has done such a great job of getting the money out,” explained Heiner Giese, legal counsel to the Apartment Association of Southeast Wisconsin.

Around 290,000 U.S. households were assisted by the program in June, compared to 160,000 in May and 100,000 in April. More than \$1.5 billion in ERA funds were distributed last month, which is more than the amount for the three previous reporting periods combined. Still, around \$46 billion in total federal funding has been allocated to this program.

In an interview with WisBusiness.com, Giese said the federal government “should have pushed harder” to get more of those funds out sooner. And while he applauded the approach of state officials, he said the roll-out of funds by Milwaukee officials has been much slower, with funds just starting to be distributed in the past few months.

The federal moratorium on evictions is due to expire at the end of July. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently extended the ban by a month, but federal officials have indicated the ban won't be extended again.

See more on the program:

<https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/emergency-rental-assistance-program>

— *By Alex Moe*