



## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is South Carolina’s Hardest Hit Fund or the SC Homeownership and Employment Lending Program (SC HELP)?**

The Housing Finance Agency Innovation Fund for the Hardest-Hit Housing Markets gave 19 states including South Carolina via the SC State Housing Finance and Development Authority (SC State Housing), the opportunity to develop innovative programs to help homeowners avoid foreclosure. SC State Housing was designated to receive and administer the funding via an eligible entity. SC HELP must satisfy funding requirements under the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (EESA). More information about the national initiative may be found at [www.makinghomeaffordable.com/pr\\_08042010.html](http://www.makinghomeaffordable.com/pr_08042010.html).

### **What is SC Housing Corp.?**

To administer these funds, SC State Housing was required to create a separate eligible entity. This entity is called SC Housing Corp. (SCHC), and is governed by a Board of Directors. The entity will administer the fund in cooperation with SC State Housing.

### **Who is eligible for SC HELP?**

These funds will go to assist “responsible borrowers.” These are homeowners who find themselves in default and foreclosure due to circumstances beyond their control. This includes, job loss, divorce, death of a spouse or extensive medical expenses.

### **What is a “responsible borrower?”**

SC HELP is here to assist borrowers who are facing possible foreclosure due to circumstances beyond their control—things like unemployment, catastrophic medical expenses, death of a spouse or divorce. A responsible borrower will have had a good payment history up until the time of the circumstances listed above. SC HELP will not be able to assist borrowers who are facing foreclosure due to poor credit and/or debt management, stripping the equity from their homes for non-essential purposes or overall mismanagement of their personal budget.

### **How do I apply?**

To begin the application process, homeowners should register online at [www.SCMortgageHelp.com](http://www.SCMortgageHelp.com). Homeowners without internet access can call 1-855-435-7472 (1-855-HELP-4-SC) and speak with a call center representative who will refer them directly to an approved SC HELP housing counselor in their area to begin the application process. Homeowners will be referred to approved housing counseling agencies selected by SC Housing Corp (SCHC). A SC HELP trained housing counselor will work with each homeowner to screen for eligibility and develop an individualized Action Plan to address the homeowner's particular needs. SCHC will review and approve eligibility applications and will authorize payments to the homeowner's mortgage servicer. Application guidance is available at this website.

### **What kind of help can I get?**

Services offered under SC HELP include:

- **Monthly Payment Assistance**- assisting homeowners with monthly payments for a defined period of time while they seek employment and a return to self sustainability;
- **Direct Loan Assistance**- for borrowers who have fallen behind on payments during periods of hardship, but who have recovered and are now sustainable. This will bring current loans and end fees and penalties;
- **Property Disposition Assistance**- in cases where the mortgage cannot be salvaged funds may be provided to release the mortgage to the lender and transition families from homeownership to tenancy.

### **Can homeowners qualify for more than one option under the SC HELP menu of services?**

Yes, homeowners may qualify for more than one type of assistance. The total amount of assistance may not exceed the maximum benefit amount for the homeowner's county.

### **Does this program apply to mobile homes/manufactured homes?**

Yes, however the property must have a mortgage and must be taxed as real property.

### **Is this a grant or a loan? Will I have to pay it back?**

This assistance is made as a loan, however, it will be a loan made at 0% interest and will be forgivable at a rate of 20% per year. If you continue to live in the home for five years the loan will be forgiven. If you sell the home before that time any balance will need to be paid from the net proceeds.

### **I'm in a "rent-to own" arrangement. I can't make my payments right now. Can you help me?**

No. This program can only help the holder of a mortgage. In a "rent-to-own" arrangement, you are a tenant.

### **Is there a household income limit?**

No, however, there is an assistance cap placed on each eligible homeowner.