



Frequently Asked Questions: Military Family Relief Assistance Program

Background: On November 10, 2005, Act 65 of 2005 was signed into law. This legislation (House Bill 1179, PN 2953) implemented the Pennsylvania Military Family Relief Assistance Program (MFRAP). This act added a new provision to the Pennsylvania Military and Veterans Code, 51 Pa.C.S. § 7319 (related to military family relief assistance).

The program is funded by voluntary donations, most of which come from Pennsylvania Personal Income Tax refund check-offs. These check-offs were authorized by Act 40 of 2005 (HB 176, PN 2565), which was signed into law on July 7, 2005, and extended by Act 48 of 2009 (tax check-off), and Act 9 of 2010, which took effect May 15, 2010.

The generosity of the Foundation for Enhancing Communities and individuals who made donations in memory of a Pennsylvania National Guard Soldier killed in action in Iraq, got the Military Family Assistance Program Fund off to a good start. Direct donations to the program are accepted and Pennsylvania taxpayers can designate a portion of their Pennsylvania Personal Income Tax refunds to support MFRAP.

For additional information e-mail ra-pa-mfrap@pa.gov or contact the MRFAP Coordinator toll-free at 1-866-292-7201.

Q. Who is eligible for assistance under the Military Family Relief Assistance Program?

A. The Military Family Relief Assistance Program applies to Pennsylvania residents who serve:

- On 30 or more consecutive days of active duty with the Armed Forces of the United States or its reserve components.
- On 30 or more consecutive days of active duty or state active duty in the Pennsylvania Army or Air National Guard.
- As a member in good standing of any reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States, including the PA National Guard, for a period of one year after release from a tour of active duty, authorized under Title 10 or Title 32, United States Code (other than active duty for training), of 30 or more consecutive days duration, when the need for assistance is directly related to the member's performance of active duty.
- A member in good standing of the PA National Guard for a period of one year after release from a tour of state active duty of 30 or more consecutive days duration, when the need for assistance is directly related to the member's performance of state active duty.
- A former member of the Armed Forces of the United States or its reserve components, including the PA National Guard for a period of 2 years after discharge if the discharge was for medical reasons arising out of the member's military service, and meets the other requirements as shown in the Guidelines, Para 4 v. 1 through 6.

The program also applies to certain members of the families of the eligible service members as long as the relatives are residents of Pennsylvania.

“Eligible service members” and “eligible relatives of eligible service members” are defined in 51 Pa.C.S. § 7319(j). An “eligible service member” is a member of the armed forces of the United States or reserve components serving on active duty for 30 or more consecutive days or a member of the Pennsylvania National Guard serving on state active duty for 30 or more consecutive days. Eligible service members must be legal residents of Pennsylvania when they apply for assistance.

Eligible relatives of eligible service members include the dependent spouse and dependent child of an eligible service member. In the case of applications for assistance to visit hospitalized service members, parents and siblings of the service member may also apply. To be eligible a relative must be a legal resident of Pennsylvania when they apply for assistance.

Q. Can traditional (M-Day) members of the Pennsylvania National Guard and their families receive relief assistance under this program?

A. No. Soldiers and Airmen of the Pennsylvania National Guard and their families are eligible when they are on active duty or state active duty for 30 or more consecutive days.

Q. What about AGR Soldiers and their families and National Guard technicians?

A. AGR Soldiers serve on full-time National Guard duty, which is generally considered active duty. National Guard technicians and their families would only be eligible if the Soldier or Airman is on active duty or state active duty for 30 or more consecutive days. National Guard and Reserve technicians, serving in a technician (federal employee) status, do not qualify.

Q. Are there any rank or grade limitations on eligibility?

A. No. Act 65 (51 Pa.C.S. § 7319) imposes no rank or grade limitations on eligibility. The key factor is the existence of an immediate financial need as a direct result of military service.

Q. How do you determine whether a service member or relative is a resident of Pennsylvania?

A. 51 Pa.C.S. § 7319(j) also defines the term “resident of Pennsylvania” for purposes of MFRAP. A resident is person who is domiciled in Pennsylvania who either physically resides here or is absent pursuant to military orders. An individual who qualifies as a “resident individual” under the Tax reform Code is also considered a resident. A person who claims legal residence in another state cannot be a resident of Pennsylvania for purposes of MFRAP.

Q. What will an applicant need to show to qualify for assistance under MFRAP?

A. Applicants must show a direct and immediate financial need as a result of the military service of the service member (51 Pa.C.S. § 7319(a)(2)). Circumstances that may qualify include:

- A sudden or unexpected loss of income related directly to military service.
- Death or critical illness of a parent, spouse, sibling or child when the service member requires assistance for travel and lodging.
- The wounding of a service member resulting in need for up to two eligible relatives to receive funds for travel to, and lodging at, the place where the soldier is hospitalized and related needs.
- Natural or manmade disasters resulting in need for food, shelter or other necessities.
- Emergency need for child care.
- Other immediate needs to be described in program guidelines.

Applicants will also need to show they are residents of Pennsylvania as defined in the law.

Q. What about other sources of assistance?

A. Applicants for the MFRAP program may be required to seek relief from other programs (Red Cross, Army Emergency Relief, Air Force Aid Society, etc.) in order to qualify for assistance under MFRAP.

Q. Where do you apply for assistance?

A. Apply to: Military Family Relief Assistance Program (MFRAP), Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Bldg. 0-47 Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville, PA 17003-5002.

To expedite the application process, applications and supporting documents may be faxed to the MFRAP office (FAX Number: 717-861-6200). Application forms are available online and by mail.

Q. What is the maximum amount of assistance?

A. The maximum grant under this program is **\$3,500** or such lesser amount determined by The Adjutant General based on the amount of money in the MFRAP special fund. No more than \$3,500 may be paid to an eligible service member and the eligible relatives of an eligible service member in any 12-month period. Eligibility for grants derives from the eligibility of the service member. This limit means that the eligible service member and all eligible relatives of the eligible service member may not receive (in total for all applicants) more than \$3,500 in any 12-month period. Only one grant will be made for each event or episode to either the eligible service member or the eligible relative of the eligible service member, but **not** to both.

Q. How will DMVA verify eligibility for relief assistance?

A. DMVA uses military command channels and organizations such as the Army Emergency Relief and Air Force Aid, as well as the Red Cross and Salvation Army, which have existing programs to verify the need for assistance in certain circumstances.

Q. When were the MFRAP guidelines published?

A. The Guidelines were published in the May 6, 2006 issue of the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* (40 Pa.B. 2825), and updated May 29, 2010. 51 Pa.C.S. § 7319(c) sets standards for the procedures for publishing the guidelines and describes the coordination needed for the guidelines needed to administer the program.

Q. How were the MFRAP guidelines developed?

A. DMVA reviewed applicable military regulations for the Army Emergency Relief Program and the Air Force Aid Society, as well as the guidelines published for Relief Assistance Programs in other states in developing the draft guidelines. DMVA sought input from the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committees and the Appropriations Committees of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and Senate in developing these guidelines.

Q. Who administers the Military Family Relief Assistance Program?

A. The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA), Office of Administration, administers the program. DMVA may consult with other government and non-government organizations but the program is staffed by DMVA.

Q. How can a person make a donation to the MFRAP?

A. Donations may be made by check payable to MFRAP and sent to Military Family Relief Assistance Program (MFRAP), Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Bldg. 0-47 Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville, PA 17003-5002. Several public-spirited groups and organizations have sponsored events to raise funds for MFRAP.

Q. Where will my donation go?

A. All gifts to the MFRAP will be paid into a special fund established at DMVA and used solely for MFRAP purposes.

Q. How much of my donation will go for administering the program?

A. All monies contained in the fund administered by DMVA will be used exclusively for relief assistance payments. None will be used to offset the cost of administering the program. Note: The Department of Revenue is allowed to retain the administrative costs of the tax check-off program before transferring funds to the DMVA MFRAP Fund, but these costs are very low.

Q. Are donations tax deductible?

A. Yes. Donations to state government programs, such as MFRAP, are tax deductible for federal income tax purposes in the same way as charitable contributions. Consult your tax advisor for details and limitations.



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DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY
AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Contact Us:

Military Family Relief Assistance Program (MFRAP)
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Bldg. 0-47 Fort Indiantown Gap
Annville, PA 17003
Phone: 717-861-6500 or toll-free at 1-866-292-7201
Fax: 717-861-6200
Email: ra-pa-mfrap@pa.gov