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SIFH 3 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The Illinois Stability Investment for Family Housing (SIFH) Pilot Round 3 is an initiative of the [Illinois Department of Human Services](#) (IDHS). This pilot is being administered by [GiveDirectly](#), with the University of Chicago [Inclusive Economy Lab](#) (IEL) providing research and evaluation services, and [Beam](#) providing technology services.

The goal of SIFH is to support families with children who don't have a regular place to stay or are unhoused currently, and to learn about how this program impacts families so we know how to best help families in the future.

This document is broken down into several sections:

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Most Common Questions

Question	Answer
Am I eligible?	Please scroll down to the Eligibility Section to see if you are eligible.

<p>What do I need to apply?</p>	<p>Applying will be easier if you have the following documents/information ready:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One (1) photo-ID, OR ○ Two (2) non-photo ID documents ● Eligible IDHS benefits information* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social Security Number (SSN), OR ○ Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), OR ○ IDHS IES Individual ID <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ You can find this on your IDHS Benefit Acceptance Letter ● Proof of guardianship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One (1) Category 1 guardianship document, OR ○ Both (2) Category 2 guardianship documents filled out in their entirety. ● Student's personal and school information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School district, ○ School name, ○ Student name, ○ Student date of birth. ● If you are experiencing homelessness (such as staying in an emergency shelter, a car, or other place where people do not usually live or sleep), you may need to submit the completed homeless status certification form. <p>Uploading a Homeless Status Certification form is only required depending on your current situation. Please refer to the Verifications Questions section to see if you are required to submit the form. The form is sometimes used for a different purpose, such as applying for a State ID. We will use it to verify your homeless status.</p> <p>*The eligible IDHS benefits are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, i.e. food stamps), 2. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), 3. State Food Assistance, and 4. Victims of Trafficking, Torture, or Other Serious Crimes (VTTC), also known as VTTC Cash (TANF)
<p>How can I apply?</p>	<p>Apply HERE! Application link: app.bybeam.co/sifh3</p> <p>The application will be available from January 27, 2025 to March 9, 2025. We will share the application with personnel from Chicago Public Schools, East St. Louis, and Harvey, and they will share it with families.</p>

	<p>We will also send the application directly to families who fill out the SIFH 3 interest form.</p>
When can I apply?	<p>The application goes live on Monday January 27, 2025 and it closes on Sunday March 9, 2025 at 11:59pm CST.</p>
What happens after I apply?	<p>After you submit your application, you will receive confirmation that your application was received to your preferred method of communication. Once we receive your application, we will review and verify whether you are eligible, and if so, submit your application into a random lottery. You will be notified of your status (whether you were selected or not) in May 2025.</p> <p>We will reach out to you if we have any questions or if we need anything else from you.</p>
How many times can I submit an application?	<p>You can submit an application one (1) time. All duplicate applications will be automatically removed from consideration.</p> <p>Every household can only apply once, even if there are more than one McKinney Vento students and/or students experiencing homelessness in one household.</p> <p>Households can only apply once per student. For example, you cannot apply for a student while the student's other parent/guardian is also applying. Duplicate applications for the same student will automatically be rejected.</p>
Who can I reach out to for help with the application?	<p>Please reach out to the McKinney-Vento Advocate, HAT Officer, or STLS Advocate in the student's school. Many McKinney Vento Advocates, HAT Officers, and STLS Advocates in Chicago, East St. Louis and Harvey received training to be able to support you. If the school staff are unable to address all your questions, please contact GiveDirectly at +1 (855) 701-5552 or sifh3support@givedirectly.org.</p>
Can I resubmit my application if I accidentally submitted the wrong documents?	<p>No. You cannot make changes to your application once you submit it. We strongly encourage you to double check all information entered in the application before submitting it.</p> <p>We will be sure to reach out if we have questions about your application or if we need you to re-submit a certain document.</p>

<p>Do I have to be a US Permanent Resident (green card holder) or a US citizen to be able to participate in SIFH 3?</p>	<p>The Stability Investment for Family Housing (SIFH 3) pilot is open to all eligible Illinois applicants, irrespective of their legal immigration status.</p> <p>That means that if you are not a legal resident or citizen, you are eligible to participate if you meet all eligibility criteria (see below). We will not share information on legal immigration status with any government agency, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).</p> <p>Applying and participating in SIFH 3 is <i>not</i> a public charge, and does not impact any pending or future change of status (e.g. applying for US Permanent Residency or citizenship in the future).</p>
<p>What if I move or change my phone number/email?</p>	<p>You can change your contact information using your applicant portal. When the application is live, you can visit your application portal to change your contact information. We strongly encourage you to update your contact information whenever it changes so we can stay in touch with you on your application.</p>
<p>How will the selection and placement lottery work?</p>	<p>We will randomly select all eligible applicants at the same time. The three different groups will be: 1) Approximately 750 families that receive \$6,500, 2) Approximately 750 families that receive \$500, 3) the remaining families will not receive a payment due to limited available funding but will receive compensation for every survey answered, and will be placed on a waitlist in case spots open up.</p>
<p>When will I hear back?</p>	<p>You will hear from us near the end of the school year (around May 2025). If selected to receive payment, you will receive your payment by June 30, 2025.</p> <p>If selected, we will be in touch with you to start the SIFH 3 enrollment process.</p>
<p>How will I receive cash payment if I am selected?</p>	<p>Selected applicants will receive payment directly from IDHS. The payment will go to the head of household listed in the IDHS benefit that you are enrolled in. You can choose to get the funds through direct deposit or the IL Link Card (EBT). You will make their choice when enrolled in the program.</p>

<p>If I am a SIFH 3 recipient, will I risk losing my public benefits?</p>	<p>The SIFH Pilot partners worked to secure waivers from state and federal agencies to protect benefits. If you are selected to receive a payment, most of the government benefits you may receive would NOT be affected. This means that receiving a cash payment will NOT affect your eligibility for the following programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social Security Insurance (SSI), ● Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), ● All Kids, ● FamilyCare, ● Moms & Babies, ● Affordable Card Act Adults (Medicaid), ● Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), ● Former Foster Care Medical Benefits, ● Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), ● Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), ● Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), ● Women, Infant and Child (WIC), ● Aid for Aging, Blind and Disabled (AABD) Cash, ● Head Start, and ● Early Head Start. <p>If you are selected to enroll, we will offer an optional benefits counseling session for you to learn about the potential impact the cash may have on your current benefits. (Note that the benefits counseling does not represent financial or legal advice.)</p>

Eligibility

Am I eligible for the SIFH 3 pilot?

To be eligible for the SIFH Pilot an applicant must meet all of the following eligibility criteria:

<p>FOR CHICAGO FAMILIES:</p> <p>One of these descriptions is true for your family:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Your family has at least one student aged 17 or younger enrolled in their school's Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS) program. The student is enrolled by December 9, 2024 (for Chicago Public Schools) and your family is still experiencing housing instability at the time of application. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Your family is experiencing homelessness, meaning you are staying in an emergency shelter, a car, or other place where people usually do not live or sleep, such as a park or abandoned
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building.

FOR FAMILIES OUTSIDE OF CHICAGO:

One of these descriptions is true for your family:

- Your family has at least one student aged 17 or younger enrolled in a program at their school that's part of **McKinney-Vento (MKV)** (also known as Families in Transition or the homeless program). The student is enrolled by September 30 (for Illinois public schools outside of Chicago) and your family is still experiencing **housing instability** at the time of application.

OR

- Your family is experiencing **homelessness**, meaning you are staying in an emergency shelter, a car, or other place where people usually do not live or sleep, such as a park or abandoned building.

Both of these statements are true for the applicant:

- You are 18 years old or older AND
- You are the parent/guardian of the student(s)

Both of these statements are true for the applicant:

- The parent/guardian OR the student must be **currently enrolled in an eligible IDHS benefit (SNAP, TANF, VTTC Cash (TANF), or State Food)** or expect to be enrolled by March 9, 2025.
- If only the student is enrolled in a benefit, you (the applicant) must be listed as the parent/guardian on their IDHS benefit.

One of the following statements is true for your student:

- Your student is enrolled in a public school in **Chicago, Harvey SD 152, or East St. Louis SD 189.**
- Your student is enrolled in any public school in one of the following counties in Illinois: Cook, Kane, Lake, Peoria, St. Clair, Will, Sangamon.

You are NOT eligible if any of the following are true:

- If your household is receiving any housing subsidy from a local government, city government, the State of Illinois or the U.S. Federal Government. Some examples include:
 - Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8)
 - Permanent supportive housing
 - Rental Assistance Program (RAP)
 - Court-Based Rental Assistance Program (CBRAP)
 - Rapid Rehousing
 - Emergency Rental Assistance Program such as ERAP or FERA
- If your household participated in SIFH Round 1 or 2.

Note: All eligibility requirements will be verified. Please see the "[Verification](#)" section of the FAQ to learn about the verification process.

Immigration status

What immigration statuses does the program accept?

Anyone with any immigration status will be considered as long as they meet the eligibility criteria. You do not have to be a permanent resident or citizen to apply.

What if my child receives IDHS benefits, but I don't due to my immigration status?

If only the child/student is enrolled in a benefit, you (the applicant) must be listed as the parent/guardian on the IDHS benefit record. If selected, you can receive payment as long as you meet this requirement, even if you are not enrolled in benefits because of your immigration status. Please note that the child/student must be currently enrolled in an eligible IDHS benefit (SNAP, TANF, VTTC Cash (TANF), or State Food) or expect to be enrolled by March 9, 2025.

Verification Questions

How will my eligibility be verified?

We will conduct a thorough manual and automatic verification for every application submitted. This includes cross-checking some information you provided with existing databases to confirm eligibility. Please make sure that the information you provided is accurate.

Can I apply even if my ID has expired?

Yes. We will accept expired identification documents if they expired on January 27, 2024 or later.

I am not the legal guardian of the student, but I am the primary caretaker of the student. How can I provide proof that I am the student's primary caretaker?

You can still apply even if you are not the legal guardian of the student.

To apply, you must be the adult who is primarily responsible for the student's wellbeing and if you are financially responsible for the student. To provide proof of guardianship you must provide both [Category 2 Parent Guardian Status Proof](#):

1. The completed and notarized [guardianship verification letter](#).
2. The completed [Letter of Support from School Personnel](#).

How will STLS or McKinney Vento status be verified?

We will use data from Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the Illinois Board of Education (ISBE) to verify the student's enrollment in the McKinney Vento program.

We are currently working to secure a data agreement with ISBE, which is crucial for verifying the McKinney-Vento eligibility of applicants from areas outside of Chicago. Our ability to consider applications from other school districts will depend on successfully finalizing this agreement by March 9, 2025.

Do I need to fill out the Homeless Status Certification form?

If both of these apply to you, you will need to fill out the Homeless Status Certification form.

- Your family is experiencing [homelessness](#) (for example, staying in an emergency shelter, a car, or other place where people usually do not live or sleep, like a park or abandoned building), AND
- Your student is NOT enrolled in a program at their school that's part of McKinney Vento* by December 9, 2024 (for CPS and all public schools in Chicago) or September 30, 2024 (for Illinois public schools outside of Chicago)

We will check school records to see if your student is enrolled in the McKinney Vento program by the specified date. If you're not sure, we strongly encourage you to fill out the Homeless Status Certification form.

*You may also know the [McKinney Vento Program](#) as Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS), Families in Transition, or the homeless program. These are services for families who are homeless or living doubled up. Ask your school staff if you're unsure.

If I am experiencing homelessness but *not* staying in a shelter, should I still fill out the Homeless Status Certification form?

If your family is experiencing homelessness AND your student is NOT enrolled in the McKinney Vento program at their school by the specified date, you need to submit the Homeless Verification Letter, even if you're not staying in a shelter. For more details, please refer to the question above to see if you need to fill out the form.

If you're experiencing homelessness but not staying in a shelter (for example, staying in a car, park, or abandoned building), you can still take the [Homeless Status Certification](#) form to a homeless shelter or a similar service provider to fill it out.

What should I do to fill out the Homeless Status Certification form?

1. Take the [linked form](#) to a homeless shelter or a similar institution that provides services to people experiencing homelessness.*
2. Have an employee at the shelter/service provider sign and date the appropriate parts of the form.
3. You sign and date the parts of the form that are meant for you.
4. Submit the form in your application.

Note: You do **not** need to have this document signed by a notary public.

This form is sometimes used for a different purpose, such as applying for a State ID. We will use this form to confirm your homeless status.

*If you're experiencing homelessness but not staying in a shelter (for example, staying in a car, park, or abandoned building), you can still take the [Homeless Status Certification](#) form to a homeless shelter or a similar service provider to fill it out.

Application questions

What if I have a disability or learning difference that might make it difficult for me to apply for SIFH 3?

The application will have features that will help with a number of disabilities and learning differences that you might experience. Some features:

1. Text to speech, so you can hear the application questions.
2. Color-blindness support
3. Alternative visual cues

What if I don't speak English?

The application will be professionally translated into Spanish. For other languages, you can click on the "Google Translate" icon and translate the text into your preferred language.

Can I ask someone at the student's school to fill the application on my behalf?

You must fill out the application yourself in order to prevent unintentional errors in the application. The school's McKinney Vento or STLS Advocate can help you understand the application and assist you throughout the application, but the application should be filled out by you. No individual, other than yourself, should be answering the application questions.

What if I started my application before March 9, 2025, but I did not finish. Can I still submit the started application after March 9, 2025?

No. The application closes on March 9, 2025 at 11:59pm. You will not be able to submit an application or make changes to an application after March 9, 2025.

Can I work on my application in more than one sitting?

Yes, you may work on your application in more than one sitting by visiting your applicant portal. If possible, we encourage you to gather all the required information/documents and apply in one sitting, so that you do not accidentally forget to complete the application.

How can I log back into my application?

You can use the [same link](#) you used to access the application. Enter the email you used when you first signed up. There will be a magic link sent to that email. You can click that magic link to access your started application. Please ensure you enter the same email address you used when you first started your application

How can I access my application if I can't login to the email address I used when I started my application?

Please contact customer support at sifh3support@givedirectly.org or +1 (855) 701-5552.

Lottery & Selection Questions

Will I be selected if I'm eligible?

Selection to participate in SIFH 3 is not guaranteed even if you are eligible. If the volume of applications is significantly higher than the spots available, we will not be able to accommodate every eligible applicant.

If there are more eligible applicants than there are spots, all eligible applicants will have an equal opportunity to be selected. Selection will be based on an equal opportunity lottery.

Will I have a higher chance of being selected if I apply several times?

No. You cannot apply several times for this program, and doing so will not increase your chances of being selected. All duplicate applications will be rejected.

If I am not selected, can I dispute the selection if I know I meet all eligibility criteria?

No. Selection for the program is based on a random lottery. In some instances, eligible applicants will be placed on a waitlist.

If I am placed on the waitlist, how can I get off the waitlist?

Applicants placed on the waitlist will be informed if a spot to receive payment becomes available. There is nothing an applicant can do to get off the waitlist. Spots will be offered randomly only if applicants selected to receive payment do not enroll in the program.

School Districts Questions

My child is a student in a school district outside of Chicago, Harvey, and East St. Louis. Can we still apply?

Yes. We are partnering with these three public school districts for outreach purposes. However, we will consider other eligible applicants in the following counties: Cook, St. Clair, Kane, Lake, Peoria, Sangamon, and Will. We are currently working to secure a data agreement with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), which is crucial for verifying the McKinney-Vento eligibility of applicants from areas outside of Chicago. Our ability to consider applications from other school districts will depend on successfully finalizing this agreement by March 9, 2025.

Regardless of your school district or eligibility, we cannot guarantee selection because of the limited spots available.

Why was my school district not selected? How were public school districts selected?

The school districts were selected in partnership with the State of Illinois, as well as with other program partners. We selected school districts in IL that have some of the highest rates of students experiencing housing instability, while also prioritizing geographic diversity across the state. Unfortunately, because SIFH is a pilot program with limited funds, not all districts with high levels of need could be selected.

Payment

If I am selected, how will I receive payment?

Selected applicants will receive payment directly from IDHS. The payment will go to the head of household listed in the IDHS benefit that you are enrolled in. You can choose to get the funds through direct deposit or the IL Link Card (EBT). You will make their choice when enrolled in the program.

If you are not already set up for direct deposit with their existing IDHS benefits, you will have the opportunity to provide your bank information and sign up for direct deposit during enrollment.

Do I need a bank or checking account to receive payment?

Only selected applicants who choose direct deposit will need a bank account to receive payment.

Can I request a check or a different form of payment instead?

No. We are only able to accommodate direct deposit and Link card payments.

Safety and Security

Should I share my application login information with school personnel if they are helping me with my application?

No. You should never share your application login information with anyone. Please keep your login information confidential.

If school personnel are assisting you with your application, make sure that your mobile device or laptop is in your hand, and you are able to see the screen at all times. If you are using a public device to complete your application, please log out when you are finished working on your application.

I do not have access to a personal computer or personal mobile device that will support this online application. Is it safe to use a public device to complete the application?

Yes. When you open the application portal, you will get a magic link to your email. You can use this magic link to access the application on a public computer. Please always make sure to log off from a public device whenever you are done using it.

Why are you asking for my SSN and how will my SSN be used and stored?

Your SSN will be used to verify your eligibility for the cash assistance program. We take the protection of your SSN very seriously. Your SSN will be securely handled and stored in a secure database. Please make sure the information you provide is accurate so we can confirm your eligibility.

Research Questions

What kind of research is being done as a part of the program?

Researchers at the University of Chicago's Inclusive Economy Lab is partnering with the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to learn how this cash payment program overall helps families and their housing situations.

Specifically, we will study how the program impacts family housing stability, students' school performance, and other areas of well-being, such as financial stability, physical and mental health, employment, access to public benefits, and involvement with the legal system.

What are the benefits of this research?

We will use what we learn from the cash payment program to improve services and policies to help families in the future. By participating, you will make a difference in your community.

Is participation in the research study mandatory?

Agreeing to participate in the research study is a requirement to be able to participate and to receive payment. Researchers will use the information you share to see how you and your family use homeless services and how your kids are doing in school by checking with the relevant agencies. You won't have to do anything extra.

There will be optional research surveys you can complete to receive additional compensation. If you agree, you may also be contacted for future research opportunities like focus groups, which will also be optional and paid.

Will my personal information be known to researchers?

Personally identifiable information about you and your household will remain confidential. Researchers will only share your personally identifiable information with the right agencies or organizations to check eligibility for the program and to see how the program helps families. These agencies may include:

- **The local housing system in your community:** This system is called the Continuum of Care and refers to the homeless shelter system, including shelters, transitional housing, and other services. We may access information shared through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) or similar data systems that track this data for people seeking services in each community.
- **The Illinois Department of Human Services:** We will access the benefits enrollment data to determine eligibility for the cash assistance program.
- **The Illinois State Board of Education and/or Chicago Public Schools:** We will access the education data to determine eligibility and study how your children are doing in school.

In some cases, we may share your information with other agencies or organizations beyond those listed above, but only with your consent. We will not use or share your personal information with any other individuals or organizations without your permission. Your privacy is very important to us, and we will take all measures to protect your data.