

Volunteer/ Staff Quick Guide

What to Ask Before Starting Application

- Do they have their bank information? (Note that routing numbers are publicly available information, so if they have their account number and institution, that is sufficient). Receiving a paper check is also an option but they would need a secure address that receives regular U.S. mail service.
- Inquire about household status. If anyone else at the same address has already applied, they will not be able to submit an online application. People who are related and who live at the same address are eligible as a unit, so should only apply once. Unrelated people who share an address and do not share expenses etc. (*i.e.*, they are distinct “households”) may be eligible but will require a telephone call or applying with an in-person FEMA representative. See below.
- Inquire about how they will authenticate the application. If they do not use email, you may have to create an email account for them. If they have email on their phone, they can verify their portal account on the phone and then you can then proceed in the portal on the computer (may have to hit the backspace key a couple of times and refresh the screen).

Household

We do not have much data on how this will play out, but for now we believe that non-related people who share an address *should* be separately eligible for the critical needs disbursement. The online portal, however, will reject a second application from the same address so this requires a telephone call to FEMA or meeting with an in-person FEMA representative. To be clear, their system will also generate a “Duplicate Address Error.” However, they have the ability to override the error and enter a comment explaining why the new applicant should be considered a separate household. Below are some factors that would weigh in favor of a separate household classification. While the applicant must be honest, you can resolve ambiguities in their favor and politely but persistently advocate for them. If the FEMA representative is not aware of this override, you can explain to them that it is allowed under their protocol.

- Separate sources of income.
- Separate living spaces, even though no USPS separate unit.
- Each responsible for their own share of rent/ mortgage payment.
- Each responsible for their own share of utilities.
- Do not share food, households supplies, etc.
- Have independently incurred emergency expenses due to Helene (food, gas, water, etc.).
- Pay for childcare costs for their own children.

This is not an exhaustive list, please use whatever individual factors the applicant describes that would support separate household status.

During Application

- Remember to fill out the form at <https://pisgahlegal.tfaforms.net/f/fema>. This will allow us to keep track of the number of people we're serving, and keep some information about what happened in the appointment in case people follow up with questions. The easiest way to complete this form is to complete it except for "Appointment notes" in the beginning, keep it open in a tab on your computer, and then fill out the "Appointment notes" section at the end of the appointment. These don't need to be detailed notes, just whether or not an application was submitted or if they needed to talk to a FEMA rep.
- To qualify for the \$750, they must mark that they need "Food, water (etc.)" in the emergency needs section; and later in the application they must mark what their critical needs are (in most cases, this is the first option for food).
- Mark that your essential utilities were out if you lost power or water for several days.
- See the larger guide for more details about what to check during the application.

When to Call FEMA / Talk to FEMA Rep

If someone is in one of these situations, you'll either need to call FEMA with them to complete their application (or give them the option of calling on their own), or if there is a FEMA rep at the clinic, direct them towards that line.

- Someone else in their household (but not their family) submitted an online application – see information above, but they will have to apply with a FEMA representative since we won't be able to override that "Duplicate Application" error online.
- They received an identity error during the application.
- Their application is submitted but they are having trouble with next steps.
 - We *can* help people upload documents by helping them log in with their phone, and we *can* help people read their FEMA letters to understand next steps. We *cannot* help with scheduling home inspections, or anything that is legal advice.

When to Add Someone to the Callback List

- If someone was rejected for something they think they should have been eligible for.
 - Note: some people are receiving rejections for things they weren't eligible for / didn't think they applied for, like for housing vouchers they don't need, but they'll think they were denied everything. Please ask clarifying questions to make sure they understand what they were denied for.
- If you weren't able to complete the application with someone because they had to leave early, or you weren't able to get in touch with a FEMA rep and they need support with that.