

COVID-19 Indoor Air Quality Assistance

Frequently Asked Questions

Note: Effective Feb. 26, 2021, eligible entities for this program were expanded to include intermediate care facilities, hospices, senior centers, adult care facilities, residential waiver settings (group homes), and substance use disorder residential treatment providers.

1. What is COVID-19 Indoor Air Quality Assistance?

COVID-19 Indoor Air Quality Assistance allows eligible private employers/beneficiaries to receive reimbursement for eligible inspections, assessments, maintenance, and/or improvements to indoor heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems to control the spread of the novel coronavirus COVID-19. Eligible expenses are goods which are installed, operational, and put in service, and services that are received for these purposes, on or after March 1, 2020, through Oct. 15, 2021. Funding for this program is part of federal financial assistance provided to the State of Ohio from the US Department of the Treasury. Funds were awarded under the Social Security Act, as amended by Section 5001 of the Coronavirus, Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act ("CARES Act") as the Coronavirus Relief Fund ("CRF"). Funding and use of funds are subject to the provisions and guidelines established by Section 601(a) of the Social Security Act, as added by Section 5001 of the CARES Act as well as guidance published by the US Department of Treasury and US Department of Treasury Inspector General.

2. What is the purpose of this program?

The program provides assistance to improve indoor air quality through ventilation and filtration in facilities serving older Ohioans to reduce potential infection due to COVID-19. Facilities that qualify can use funds for eligible inspections, assessments, maintenance, and improvements to Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems for both installed and portable solutions.

3. Who is eligible?

Assistance is available for non-governmental nursing homes, assisted living facilities, adult day centers, intermediate care facilities, hospices, senior centers, Class 2 and Class 3 Residential Treatment providers (adult care facilities), residential waiver settings (group homes), and substance use disorder residential treatment providers that have a physical location within Ohio.

4. How much funding can employers/beneficiaries receive?

Employers/beneficiaries can receive up to \$15,000 reimbursement only for necessary eligible expenditures to address the COVID-19 pandemic, not routine expenses. Employers/beneficiaries can use funds to inspect and assess their air quality needs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, employers/beneficiaries can hire an HVAC professional to analyze a facility's system and to identify upgrades to improve overall system performance.

Employers/beneficiaries can also use funds to address improvements through portable air ventilation, filtration, enhancement of current filtration systems, and other interventions.

5. Does the money come from employer premiums or Ohio taxes?

No. The program is federally funded with money from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, as more fully described in FAQ #1 above.

6. Why is BWC administering the program? What is BWC's connection to the program?

BWC is a recipient of federal funds and will be distributing financial assistance to eligible employers/beneficiaries. The program involves employee safety and BWC has experience administering safety funding within our employer programs.

7. Can HVAC companies, HVAC contractors, commissioning providers, or engineering firms apply for this assistance?

No, only the aforementioned eligible employers may apply for this assistance.

8. May employers/beneficiaries use any HVAC company they choose?

Yes. However, services provided by those who do not meet the qualifications for providing the respective services as detailed in the approved expenditures section (e.g., licensed HVAC contractor) may not be reimbursable.

9. Will these funds be awarded for retroactive requests?

Yes, if documentation and receipts are provided to show costs incurred from March 1, 2020, through Oct. 15, 2021.

10. How long will it take to receive these funds?

BWC will review applications on a first-come, first-served basis.

11. What if I can't have my equipment installed, operational, and put in service, or have services rendered, by the Oct. 15, 2021, deadline? Can I get an extension?

At this time, no.

12. Are there prohibitions on combining COVID-19 Indoor Air Quality Assistance with other CARES Act funding or COVID-19 relief federal funding?

Yes. Employers/Beneficiaries are not eligible for COVID-19 Indoor Air Quality Assistance if any other federal funding has been used for the same purpose.

13. If a small business received a Small Business Administration (SBA) Payment Protection Program (PPP) or Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) grant or loan due to the COVID-19 pandemic, may the small business also receive COVID-19 Indoor Air Quality Assistance?

Receiving a PPP or EIDL grant or loan for COVID-19 would not necessarily make a small business ineligible to receive COVID-19 Indoor Air Quality Assistance. However, the business must not have already used the PPP or EIDL loan or grant for expenditures for COVID-19 indoor air quality improvement purposes.

14. What are the tax ramifications for the receipt of COVID-19 Indoor Air Quality Assistance?

Every taxpayer's situation is unique and BWC is not in a position to offer tax advice. Therefore, employers/beneficiaries should contact their tax professional for advice.

15. Does the applicant need to be in Ohio?

Yes, only eligible entities that have the proper license or certification and have a physical location in Ohio are eligible for the assistance.

16. Can an out-of-state HVAC company provide service?

HVAC contractors need to be licensed by the Ohio Construction Licensing Board to perform work on commercial buildings in Ohio. Professional engineers (firms) need to be licensed in Ohio to practice engineering and design HVAC system modifications. Professional engineering licenses are obtained through the State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Surveyors. Commissioning Providers (CxP) must be certified by a recognized commissioning authority to perform commissioning services on the building type in question.

17. I have an assisted living facility and adult day center in one building. Can I receive financial assistance for each separately?

Each nursing home and assisted living facility with a unique Ohio Department of Health license number and each adult day center with its own Medicaid number is eligible for financial assistance.

18. I have a nursing home with its own HVAC system in one building and next door is an adult day center with its own HVAC system. Can I receive financial assistance for each separately?

Each nursing home and assisted living facility with a unique Ohio Department of Health license number, and each adult day center with its own Medicaid number, is eligible for financial assistance.

19. I have a nursing home in one building and next door is an adult day center and both share the same HVAC system. Can I receive financial assistance for each separately?

Each nursing home and assisted living facility with a unique Ohio Department of Health license number, and each adult day center with its own Medicaid number, is eligible for financial assistance.

20. I have a nursing home in half of a building and an assisted living section in the other half. Can I receive financial assistance for each separately?

Each nursing home and assisted living facility with a unique Ohio Department of Health license number, and each adult day center with its own Medicaid number, can receive financial assistance. If the nursing home has a license number but the assisted living section does not, only the nursing home is eligible for financial assistance.

21. I have a nursing home with two wings and each is served by its own HVAC system. Can I receive financial assistance for each separately?

Each nursing home and assisted living facility with a unique Ohio Department of Health license number, and each adult day center with its own Medicaid number, is eligible for financial assistance.

22. I have a nursing home in one building and next door is the administration building. Can I receive financial assistance for each separately?

Each nursing home and assisted living facility with a unique Ohio Department of Health license number, and each adult day center with its own Medicaid number, is eligible for financial assistance.

23. I performed maintenance and made improvements to my nursing home's HVAC system in April. Can I be reimbursed?

If you are otherwise eligible, you can be reimbursed for the approved expenses incurred on or after March 1, 2020, upon submission of documentation and receipts that properly document the approved services or materials used to improve the HVAC system. Please note certain expenses can be reimbursed only if qualifying contractors performed the work.

24. I've been planning to make improvements to my nursing home's HVAC system in a few months. Can I get funds in advance?

No, goods must be installed, operational, and put in service, and services must be rendered, by Oct. 15, 2021. Moreover, financial assistance is on a reimbursement basis only.

25. I'm planning some work on my nursing home's HVAC system but am not sure if the work would qualify for assistance. Can I get approval in advance?

Yes. Please feel free to send a request to the BWC grants email: grants@bwc.state.oh.us. However, financial assistance is on a reimbursement basis only.

26. Can I use the assistance for COVID-19 testing to buy N95 masks, install Plexiglas barriers, etc.?

No. This assistance is expressly for the purpose of improving the quality of indoor air to slow the spread of COVID-19.

27. Can I use the assistance to pay wages to my staff for maintaining or improving the HVAC system?

No. However, assistance may be used to pay for approved services performed by others.

28. Can I use the assistance to buy portable ventilation systems, room fans or window air conditioners for individual rooms?

No, unless the portable ventilation systems, room fans or window air conditioners can provide the occupied space with increased outside air and, at a minimum, MERV 13 filtration.

29. Can I use the assistance to replace windows?

Yes, as long as the new windows are intended to be openable; i.e., replacing windows that were unable to be opened.

30. Can I use assistance to repair the environmental controls in the van we use to transport residents to medical appointments, shopping, etc.?

No.

31. Can I be reimbursed under this program for installing bi-polar ionization and UV-C devices in my existing HVAC system?

Yes. Since these are secondary devices that treat indoor air instead of increasing ventilation or filtration, they should be carefully considered for installation only after consulting with an HVAC professional and assuring the HVAC system is being operated and maintained to provide proper ventilation and filtration. These secondary devices are not substitutes for proper ventilation and filtration.

32. Is there a deadline for spending the money or submitting documentation and receipts?

Yes. Oct. 15, 2021, is the deadline for goods to be installed, operational, and put in service, and for services to be rendered. All documentation and receipts must be submitted with the completed application by Oct. 15, 2021.

33. I lost my receipts. Can I still be reimbursed?

Full documentation including receipts and invoices are required for reimbursement.

34. Is money I spent on taxes and shipping for materials and equipment covered?

Yes, as long as they were for approved purchases.

35. A local handyman has been taking care of our HVAC system for years and does a good job. Why must I use a licensed HVAC contractor to perform the same tasks to qualify?

HVAC contractors must be licensed by the Ohio Construction Licensing Board to perform work on commercial buildings in Ohio.

36. If I receive assistance, how long until I can apply again?

At this time, each eligible request can qualify for a one time maximum of \$15,000.

37. I've already done some of this work and have the receipts, but I'd like to get more money to do more work. How should I proceed?

Only reimbursement is available. Remember that only expenses incurred from March 1, 2020, through Oct. 15, 2021, are eligible.

38. What senior centers are recognized by the Ohio Department of Aging and are eligible for this assistance?

Senior centers that meet the definition below and are recognized by the Ohio Department of Aging are eligible for this assistance as long as they are a non-governmental organization.

Based on **ORC 173.11 System of multipurpose senior centers** and **Older Americans Act, Section 102.21, 36**, a senior center serves the following purpose(s):

- Provides centralized, coordinated medical, social, supportive, and rehabilitative services to older adults;
- Encourages older adults to maintain physical, social, and emotional well-being and to live dignified and reasonably independent lives in their own homes;
- Diminishes the rate of inappropriate entry and placement of older adults in nursing homes, sheltered housing for older adults, and related facilities;
- Is a facility that encourages the maximum collocation and coordination of services for older individuals; and
- A community facility for the organization and provision of a broad spectrum of services, which shall include provision of health (including mental and behavioral health), social, nutritional, and educational services and the provision of facilities for recreational activities for older individuals.

39. May certified substance use disorder residential treatments providers with separate physical locations apply?

Yes, separate physical locations of this type of provider may apply.



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