Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)

Office of Community Services
Low-Income Household
Water Assistance Program
(LIHWAP)



Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

2022 Policy and Procedures Manual

November 1, 2021

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LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLD WATER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHWAP) OVERVIEW

Purpose

Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) provides funds to assist low-income households with water and wastewater bills. LIHWAP grants are available to States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, U.S. Territories, and Federally and state-recognized Indian Tribes and tribal organizations that received fiscal year 2021 Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) grants.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) launched the new Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) established under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. LIHWAP is a temporary emergency program that will help low-income households and families afford water and wastewater services during the Coronavirus pandemic. Along with funding provided under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, LIWHAP will help residents pay their water bills, avoid shutoffs and support household water system reconnections related to non-payment.

LIHWAP provides grants to states, territories and tribes to work with private owners and operators of public water systems and treatment. Although Congress established LIHWAP as an emergency program to help states respond to the coronavirus pandemic, ACF is directing states to model LIHWAP after the existing Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), meaning county governments functioning as local LIHEAP agencies might also be responsible for administering this new program. In 13 states, county governments either fully administer the LIHEAP program or share that responsibility with local community-based agencies.

Legislative Background

Water Assistance Program Funding Plan Available Through American Rescue Plan Act

- The is no permanent authorization for LIHWAP
- Congress appropriated funding in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 and an additional funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) of 2021 for new emergency water and wastewater assistance program.
- The legislation provided emergency assistance to low-income households, particularly those with the lowest incomes, that pay a high proportion of household income for drinking water and wastewater services.
- Grantees must provide funds to owners or operators of public water systems or treatment facilities to reduce arrearages of and rates charged to such households for such services.
- Use existing processes, procedures, policies, and systems in place to provide assistance to low-income households, including by using existing programs and program announcements, application and approval processes.

1. The administration of this program is authorized under Section 533 Title V of Division H of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Public Law No: 116-260. Consistent with legislative instructions, program requirements use existing processes, procedures, and policies currently in place to provide assistance to low-income households. In particular, OCS has closely modeled the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program's (LIHWAP) terms and conditions on assurances and requirements outlined in the Low-Income Household Energy Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 8621 et seq.
2. The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for HHS Awards is located under 45 CFR Part 75. In accordance with 45 CFR 75.101 applicability, this program must comply with 45 CFR Part 75 in its entirety. No exceptions have been identified.
3. Additional applicable regulations and requirements can be found in the General Terms and Conditions for Mandatory: Formula, Block and Entitlement Grants.
4. In Illinois, LIHWAP applicants are served by a pre-approved group of Local Administering Agencies. A Local Administering Agency (LAA) is a Community Action Agency (CAA) or other community-bases organization or unit of general purpose local government or public agency which is authorized to administer LIHWAP funds received from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (the Department)

SECTION 1- PROGRAM NEEDS, GOALS AND ALLOCATIONS

Community Needs and Program Goals

1.1 Description of Emergency Household Drinking Water and Wastewater Needs

The Office of Community Assistance (OCA) priorities are the ***restoration of household water services***, including drinking water and wastewater services by reducing arrearages, and reducing rates charged to households. Fees allowed include late fees, reconnection fees or any regular fees that are included on the bill.

1.2 Operational Priorities and Emergency Flexibilities

Consistent with the goal of the American Rescue Plan to provide immediate relief to the American people, the Program's priority is to immediately restore services to households without current water services, immediate payment of existing arrearages (defined as owing $250 or more for water and wastewater combined)and to prevent disconnection of drinking water and wastewater services after a previous moratorium on water services due to Covid-19.

For the City of Chicago, the city's moratorium will continue indefinitely, so the priority is to ***reduce arrearages only*** for Chicago residents.

1.3 Implementation Date and Priority Groups

There will not be a statewide start date. A roll out of the program will occur as the grants are executed throughout November at each local agency. The proposed implementation of the water program will be November 1, 2021 and will remain through August 31, 2023, or until funds are exhausted.

According to funding availability, Local Administering Agencies will offer three types of assistance:

Priority Group 1: Disconnected services
Priority Group 2: Imminent Disconnect
Priority Group 3: Households with past due arrearages $250 or more

Estimated Funding Allocations

1.4 LIHWAP Funds Allocated

Estimated amounts of available LIHWAP funds will be used for each component operated.

	Consolidation Of Appropriations Act Of 2021 Percentage (%)	**American Rescue Plan Grant Percentage %**
Household Benefits	77%	77%
Outreach/Eligibility Determination	8%	8%
Administration (State)	5%	5%
Administration - Subrecipients	10%	10%
Total	100%	100%

Categorical Eligibility

1.5 Current Recipients are *categorically eligible* for LIHWAP Assistance

Recipients are categorically eligible for LIHWAP without providing additional income verification for the following programs:

- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Means-tested Veterans Programs
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Documentation will be necessary to prove the household is currently receiving any one of these types of assistance.

Determination of Eligibility for Direct Enrollment

1.6 Countable Income

Gross income (before taxes or any other deduction) must be used to verify income with limited exceptions. The main exception is Social Security checks that have a Medicare deduction ONLY for Hospital, Medical and/ or Prescription. Drug insurance (Parts A, B, and D).

1.7 Forms of Countable Income

Applicable Countable Income used to determine a household's eligibility for LIHWAP can be found below. The following are considered income and require 30-day documentation:

- Alimony
  Annuities (a fixed sum of money paid to someone each year, typically for the rest of their life: divide by the appropriate number to get a monthly amount when applicable)
- Armed Forces allotments & allowances for housing, food, and clothing (BAH on paystub)
- Cash gifts, excluding Every Dollar Counts/Universal Basic Income projects approved by the Department (may be verified via Income Affidavit or benefits protection letter in the following counties: Cook, Iroquois, Kane, LaSalle, Lee, Livingston, Ogle, Will and Winnebago)
- Child Support
- Commission checks that cover more than one month should be divided by the appropriate number of months to equal the 30-day income requirement
- Contract Income
- Educational Stipends (a periodic payment, especially a scholarship or fellowship allowance granted to a student)
- Farm Income - such as income from selling farm crops or livestock or similar bulk product once a year, must be divided by 12 months to equal the 30-day income requirement
- Federal Black Lung Benefits
- Gambling proceeds and/or annual gross income should not exceed the annual 200% income eligibility
- "GoFundMe" Money received
- GA (General Assistance)
- Interest, dividends, or royalties
- IRA - Regular payments of an IRA (Individual Retirement Account) should be considered income just like a pension
- Legal settlements with regular payments (not lump sum)
- Lottery - A one-time lump sum payment of lottery winnings must be divided by 12 months to equal the 30-day income requirement

- Onetime lump-sum payments such as rebates/credits, winnings from lotteries (see above "Lottery"), refund deposits, etc.
- Online income received from selling items regularly on eBay, PayPal, Facebook or other sites for profit must be divided by 12 months to equal the 30-day income requirement
- Payments for mortgage or sales contracts (i.e. income received for contract-for-deed sales)
- Railroad Retirement Benefits
- Rental income - counted if the applicant rents property outside his/her own household or the applicant shares his/her home, i.e., one household unit with a boarder, lodger and/or renter who is NOT related: DO NOT COUNT RENTERS/BOARDERS WITHIN THE HOME AS HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS OR INCLUDE THEIR INCOME IN THE HOUSEHOLD'S INCOME
- Rideshare, vehicle, and/or transport services for hire (Uber, Lyft, Relay Rides, Sidecar, etc.) - calculate the 30-day income using customer logs, ledgers, and/or printouts from PayPal, etc. NOTE: If the expenses are claimed, a Self-Employed worksheet with documentation of expenses are required. An Income Affidavit will be accepted if expense deductions are not submitted by the customer.
- Self-Employment
- Sick pay
- Social Security income received for a spouse that resides in a nursing home/assisted living facility that is not paid directly and completely to the facility is countable income for the LIHEAP household
- Strike benefits
- Support of guardian and/or adopted child(ren) income received (adoption subsidies)
- Tips and gratuities; money received over and above payment due for a service
- Unemployment Insurance (state only)
- Wages
- Worker's Compensation (insurance payments made directly to the insured)

The following sources are not applicable forms of countable income to determine eligibility:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits *(countable in LIHEAP)*
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Women, Infants, and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program (WIC) benefits
- Covid 19 Economic Impact Payments (Stimulus Checks)

SECTION 2 – BENEFITS

Eligibility

2.1 Eligibility threshold

The eligibility threshold for LIHWAP will be **150% of the Federal Poverty Level or 60% of State Median Income. This is approximately 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.**

2.2 Renters and Water Assistance

Renters may qualify for LIHWAP benefits provided they can show proof that:

- the water and/or wastewater utilities are included in their rent.
- and the amount past due has led to disconnection status or imminent disconnection.

To qualify, the applicant must submit a bill that shows that they are in disconnect status, in danger of being disconnected, or their arrearage amount is $250 or greater for their water and wastewater bills combined.

The customer may use their lease or other proof, such as a statement from the landlord to verify the water and wastewater utilities are included in their rent. They may also use the **LIHWAP Utilities Included in Rent Verification Form.** This can be completed by the landlord and signed or may be verified at the Local Administering Agency by an Intake Worker.

2.3 Variables used to determine benefit levels

- Income
- Household Drinking Water Burden
- Household Wastewater Burden
- Other: Income determines the burden of a ratio of income cost of the water. Households will receive a benefit to reconnect and/or to reduce arrearage based on their drinking water and wastewater arrearage amounts, and their amount to reconnect, with late fees and reconnections fees associated.

2.4 Benefit Levels

- Minimum Benefit Amount to Reconnect - $0
- Minimum Benefit Amount to Reduce Arrearages without Disconnection or threat of Disconnection - $250
- Maximum Benefit - $1500

2.5 Reconnection Assistance

The goal is to restore services as soon as possible. While we are not mandating reconnection within 48 hours, we are strongly recommending it. For the customers who have service, but you are helping them with arrearages only, you can process within 30 days.

2.6 Reconnection Assistance for New Residents

Reconnection Assistance also covers households that are trying to get into a new residence but cannot get utilities in their name because of high outstanding/old balances. These are considered "crisis" applications. In these cases, we would mirror LIHEAP and we would assist these customers to get services with a water deposit and help them with their arrearages.

2.7 Benefit Period

The LIHWAP Benefit is a limited, ***one-time***, assistance program designed to help households that are facing the threat of imminent disconnection, have already been disconnected or have past due (arrearage) balances over $250 for their water and wastewater services combined. Customers may apply one time for water and one time for wastewater for the life of the program, which is December 1, 2021 – August 31, 2023.

LIHWAP Program does not allow credits; however, if the payment was made after the pledge, the credit balance or refund is between the customer and the vendor. A refund would not come back to the LAA because it would've been the customer's payment that created the credit, not the LIHWAP pledge/payment.

2.8 Priority Period

There is no priority period for LIHWAP, and the program will be available year-round. The only priority for LIHWAP will be for people with high water burdens, people facing imminent disconnection or those in disconnect status. A priority period would not help customers who have needs later in the year.

2.9 Prioritizing Water Assistance for the Vulnerable Population

While the Office of Community Assistance will make every effort to assist the most vulnerable population, our funding allows us the ability to assist all customers who are disconnected, in threat of disconnection and those households with arrearages at least $250 for water, wastewater or the combination of both.

2.10 Ability to Include the Disabled the Means to Submit Applications for Benefits

Application may be done by in-person, by proxy, via telephone, email, U.S mail or other secure delivery service.

2.11 Home Visits

Home visits are currently discouraged at this time due to COVID-19; however, the applicant may apply for LIHWAP without leaving their home by allowing someone to apply for them by proxy, fill out an application via telephone, or by contacting the agency for assistance in completing the application.

2.12 Moratoriums on Shut Offs

Currently the City of Chicago's moratorium is expected to continue indefinitely. There are no other locations in the state of Illinois that currently have a moratorium on shut offs.

SECTION 3 – OUTREACH

3.1 Methods Used to Make Customers Aware of LIHWAP Assistance

The methods the local agencies throughout may use the following to make customers aware of LIHWAP Assistance:

- Posters and flyers will be used in local and county social service offices, Social Security Office, VA Offices, etc.
- Articles and/or public service announcements will be placed in local newspapers or broadcast media announcements.
- Inserts in water vendor utility bills will be used to inform individuals of the availability of all types of LIHWAP assistance.
- Multi-lingual announcements will be used in languages spoken by low-income households within utility service area and/or notification in ethnic language news and broadcast media outlets.
- The Office of Community Assistance will Inform low-income applicants of the availability of all types of LIHWAP assistance at application intake for other low-income programs, such as LIHEAP and assessment in CSBG.
- The State office will encourage Local Administering Agencies and Community Action Agencies to use all types of outreach listed above, including working with the water vendors to advertise the assistance available to their customers and the use of the agencies social media (Facebook) to inform households of the availability of LIHWAP.

SECTION 4 – COORDINATION

4.1 Coordination with Other Programs Available to Low-Income Households

- The Local Administering Agencies (LAA's) will provide information at intake for LIHEAP, PIPP, IHWAP and CSBG.
- The Office of Community Assistance is working with other State agency programs such as SNAP and TANF to increase participation in LIHEAP, LIHWAP, IHWAP and CSBG.

4.2 Coordination with Relevant Regulatory Authorities that Govern Water Suppliers

The Illinois Commerce Commission oversees the provision of adequate, reliable, efficient, and safe services to Illinois citizens served by water and sewer public utility companies.

SECTION 5 – AGENCY DESIGNATION

5.1 LAA to Determine Eligibility

The Office of Community Assistance categorizes itself as a Commerce Agency and a Community Service Agency. The Local Administering Agency (LAA) will determine the client's eligibility and process the benefit payments to the water service providers. Eligibility for selecting Local Administering Agencies are determined when the agency submits a grant application and is approved.

5.2 Types of Local Administering Agencies (LAA's)

The State uses various types of local administering agencies, including, but not limited to

- Community Action Agencies
- Local Governments
- City Governments
- County Governments
- Other Non-Profit Agencies

SECTION 6 – PROGRAM, FISCAL MONITORING AND AUDIT

6.1 GATA Procedures

The Office of Community Assistance requires following GATA (Grant Accounting and Transparency Act) procedures. Grantee strategies for monitoring compliance with the Grantee's and Federal LIHWAP policies and procedures for Grantee employees will be through departmental oversight.

The Local Administering Agencies will be monitored periodically by:

- On-site evaluation
- Annual program review
- Monitoring through central database
- Desk Reviews
- Client File Testing/sampling

6.2 Monitoring Schedule and Protocol

Fiscal and programmatic monitoring will be accomplished by the end of the program year. Those agencies who have spent at least 50% of their allocation will be monitored. All others will be monitored subsequently.

6.3 Selection for Review

Each agency will be monitored through desk review or on-site, as required by HHS.

- Annual Site visits will be based on a combination of risk assessment scoring, spending amount and date of last visit.

- Desk Reviews will be conducted on an annual basis based on risk management and spending amount. Those not selected for on-site monitoring the first year will be selected for desk review.

6.4 PY2022 HHS NOGA Exhibits

Exhibit B. Deliverables or Milestones

Grantee shall perform the following tasks, including but not limited to:

1. Grantee must inform customer of benefit amount at time of intake. Grantee shall attempt to obtain a vendor agreement with each water and/or wastewater supplier. A water bill pledge must be completed for each customer payment.
2. On a quarterly basis, following the same schedule as CSBG, Grantee will upload the LIHWAP STARS Activity Report and a copy of the GRS screen 352 to the assigned quarter report tool in STARS.

Exhibit E. Performance Measures:

Grantee's performance for this Award will be measured based on the LIHWAP requirements, as applicable, that Grantor will review periodically during the Award Term, including, but not limited to the following:

1. The number of applications that have exceeded the 30-day timeframe to reach approved or denied for LIHWAP benefit status.
2. The number of LAA/CAA unpaid LIHWAP benefits that are more than 60 days from the service date.

SECTION 7 – FAIR HEARINGS

7.1 Fair, Independent, Hearing Procedures

The Department will follow a system developed for LIHEAP and IHWAP that provides an opportunity for a fair resolution process to households whose claims for assistance under LIHWAP are denied or are not acted upon with reasonable time. The resolution process includes three levels of review:

1. The Informal Conference conducted at the Local Administering Agency
2. The Review of the LAA decision at the State/Department's programmatic review level
3. The Formal Administrative Hearing through the Department's administrative hearing rules (56 Ill Admin Code 2605)

The LAA shall designate a hearing officer to conduct the informal conference. The informal conference is designed to understand the action taken or the reason for delay. At the end of the informal conference, the LAA will give the claimant a written statement describing the result of the conference and citing the policy reasons for the decision. A copy of the report must be filed in the applicant's name. In the event the claimant is not satisfied with the informal conference determination, the claimant may request a review at the Department's Formal Administrative Hearing Process.

7.2 When and How Applicants are informed of the rights the appeal

Applicants are informed at intake and receive a copy of their appeal rights. Posters are places in al intake sights as an additional form of notification of fair hearing rights.

SECTION 8 – PROGRAM INTEGRITY

8.1 Fraud Reporting Mechanisms

- On-line fraud reporting
- Report directly to the local administering agency/district office or Grantee Office
- Report to Inspector General or Attorney General
- Forms and procedures in place for local agencies/district offices and vendors to report fraud, waste, and abuse
- Report directly to the State LIHWAP Office:
    - Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
      Office of Community Assistance: Attn: Fraud Unit
      500 East Monroe
      Springfield, Il 62701

8.2 Identification Documentation Requirements

- Social Security Cards are requested at intake to be photocopied and retained for all household members. Cards are not necessary if there is proof of SSN on a previous LIHEAP app. This is for new LIHEAP customers only.
- Social Security Number (without actual card) is required for all household members.
- If an applicant does not have a Social Security Number (SSN) they must provide an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). ITIN (Individual Taxpayer Identification Number used for tax processing by the Internal Revenue Service)
- Metal Social Security cards are not acceptable; they are memorabilia and not government issue.
- A photocopy of the applicant's Drivers' License or Illinois State Identification Card is requested but not required at intake for the Head of Household (person submitting application).

8.3 Identification Verification

LIHWAP will use resources available to the State LIHEAP program, as needed, to verify identification documentation. The State office has an interagency agreement with the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) for investigative and eligibility verification. In addition, the State LIHEAP office has an interagency agreement with the Illinois Department of Employment Security to assist with income verification.

8.4 Citizenship/Legal Residency Verification

All applicants must provide a valid Social Security Number (SSN) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number/ITIN for all persons in the household in addition to income documentation. A valid SSN is defined as a nine-digit number issued to U.S. citizens,

permanent residents, and qualified temporary residents by the Social Security Administration. An Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) is a United States tax processing number issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

To receive federally funded LIHWAP benefits, each applicant must have ***at least one household member who is a U.S. Citizen***. Income of ***all household members*** – regardless of immigration status – must be documented, verified, and included in the calculation of the LIHWAP benefit amount. The income of any non-qualified alien must be placed in the "Other" field for the head of household on the combined LIHEAP/LIHWAP application.

8.5 Income Verification

Note: Income verification applies only to households that have **not been determined to be categorically eligible** based on enrollment in other programs. (see Section 2.5)
Methods used for Income Verification:

- Bank statements
- Pay Stubs
- Social Security Award Letters
- Unemployment Insurance Letters
- Zero-Income Statements

8.6 Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality

- There is policy in place prohibiting release of information without written consent.
- Grantee LIHWAP database includes privacy/confidentiality safeguards.
- Employee Training is provided for the Local Administering Agencies and the Grant management Staff.
- Physical files must be stored in a secure location. The Agency may keep them separate, with LIHEAP or with CSBG files. The agency may decide how they want to keep their files; however, the LAA will need to be able to upload or produce the complete file for monitoring purposes.
    - LIHWAP files must contain the following:
        - Thoroughly completed LIHEAP/IWAP/LIHWAP Application.
        - Proof of 30-day income for all applicable household members or Zero Income Affidavits & Supporting Documents.
        - Proof of Social Security numbers for all household members.
        - Most recent utility bill (s)
        - Proof that the household is disconnected or in danger of imminent disconnection.
        - Water/Wastewater Pledge.
        - Rent verification (when necessary).

8.7 Verifying Authenticity

- All vendors must supply a valid Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN), SSN or

W-9 Form.

- Vendors are verified through water and wastewater bills provided by the household.

8.8 Benefits Policy – Water and Wastewater Utilities

- Applicants are required to submit proof of physical residency.
- Applicants must submit a current water or wastewater bill.
- Exchange with utilities that verify:
  - Account ownership
  - Balances
  - Payment history
- Payments should be coordinated among other water and wastewater assistance programs to avoid duplication of payments.
- Payments of water suppliers and invoices from water suppliers are reviewed for accuracy.
- Procedures are in place to require prompt refunds from the utilities in cases of account closure.
- Separation of duties between intake and payment approval.
- Vendor agreements specify requirements selected above and provide enforcement mechanism.

8.9 Investigations and Prosecutions

- Customers found to have committed fraud are banned from LIHWAP assistance for the remainder of the current program.
- Contracts with local agencies require that employees found to have committed fraud are reprimanded or terminated.
- The Grantee will attempt collection of improper payments.
- The Local Agency or Grantee may conduct investigation of fraud complaints from the public.
- Referrals are sent to the State Inspector General.
- Vendors found to have committed fraud may no longer participate in LIHWAP.
- Based on sufficient evidence of fraudulent activity, the Department may sanction LIHWAP customers, including staff, intake contractors, volunteers, and vendors.

SECTION 9 – VENDORS

9.1 Vendor Agreement

A critical part of the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program is securing vendor agreements. This agreement sets guidelines that the vendor must follow.

The Vendor Agreement must:

- Clearly define all the details and roles of each party

- Set expectations for both parties
- Establish provisions for circumstantial changes
- Detail consequences if services are not fulfilled
- Fulfill federal requirement for consumer protection

We do not want households to be left unserved due to an unwilling vendor. If a water vendor does not participate, they will not receive the funding to lower the debt owed to them by eligible households. All efforts will be made to negotiate with vendor to resolve any issues.

9.2 Securing the Agreement

Secure two signed copies of every agreement – one for the agency file and one for the vendor file. Keep this agreement for monitoring purposes once an agreement has been signed:

1. Vendor name
2. Vendor address
3. Vendor telephone number and contact person
4. Vendor Federal Employer's Identification Number (FEIN)

The FEIN is always a nine-digit number (no letters). If the vendor does not have a FEIN, use the owner's Social Security number, which is also a nine-digit number.

9.3 Types of Agreements

There are two vendor agreements available for agencies to consider when securing a payment from the Water or Wastewater Utility.

1. The **Standard Vendor Agreement** – This is the first and best agreement to use with the both the Publicly Owned Water Vendors (managed by local or state government) and the Privately/Shareholder Owner Water Vendors) for-profit systems managed by investors or shareholders)
2. Simplified agreements may be the only thing possible with small utilities/vendors that do not want to sign the Standard Vendor Agreement. Local Agencies may use the **Water Bill Pledge** for participation in the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program in those cases, or a form that the local administering agency uses for smaller vendors; however, the agency should always try to use the Standard Vendor Agreement, if possible.

9.4 Contents of the Vendor File

An important aspect of the Low-Income Water Assistance Program is the relationship between the agency (LAA) and various water and wastewater vendors in their area. The agency should secure a file on each Water or Wastewater Vendor. These agreements should include:

- the vendor name, address, telephone number and the Federal Employers Identification Number (FEIN)

- All Department vendor bulletins and memorandums relating to the energy program
- A copy of the Illinois Administrative Code 280 and 281, (Illinois Commerce Commission rules governing service) if applicable.
- Miscellaneous correspondence, including correspondence to and from the vendors and contact persons, etc.

YOUR RIGHTS

Under the **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, Low Income Household Water Assistance Program** and the **Illinois Home Weatherization Assistance Program**

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is designed to help income eligible households meet the rising cost of home energy.

Eligibility and the assistance level depend on:

- the household's income and number of members;
- whether or not the household pays for its home energy costs directly or the home energy costs are included in the rent, and if rent exceeds 30% of income;
- the type of home energy fuel if the household pays directly; and
- the region in which the household is located.

Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) provides funds to assist low-income households with water and wastewater bills. Eligibility and the assistance level depend on:

- the household's income.
- whether or not the household is in crisis by being disconnected, imminent disconnection and being in arrearage of $250 or more.

The Illinois Home Weatherization Assistance Program (IHWAP) is designed to help income eligible households conserve fuel and save money by making their homes and apartments energy efficient.

Eligibility for the Weatherization Program depends on:

- the household's income and number of members; and
- whether or not the household can show proof of home ownership, or the landlord complies with the program requirements.

Appeal Rights

You have the right of appeal to any of the programs if:

- your application was not processed in a timely fashion (approximately 30 days after you submit all your information to the agency).
- you disagree with the outcome of your application.
- or you believe the payment or benefit received is incorrect.

Appeal Process

The first step in the appeal process is an informal conference at a local agency. You may request an informal conference by contacting your:

During this hearing you have the right to:

- be represented or bring to the conference a representative of your choice.
- present oral and written statements and other evidence.
- cross-examine witnesses; and/or
- bring an interpreter, if needed.

The informal conference will be held by a designated hearing officer at the Local Administering Agency. The purpose of the informal conference is to ensure that the applicant understands the outcome of the application and/or the reason for a delay. The applicant must request a conference within 30 days of receipt of a notice of a decision on the applicant's application or within 60 days if notification has not been received.

If you have completed the informal conference and still are not satisfied with the decision, you may request a state review. The Local Administering Agency will advise you on how to request a state review, the second step in the process.

The state office will review your case and advise both you and the local agency of the decision.

If you are still unsatisfied after the state review, you may request a formal hearing by a state appeals officer. This testimony will be recorded, and a written decisionwill be based on the record.

These are **Your Rights.** If you do not understand them,please contact your Local Administering Agency.

To report suspected Energy Assistance fraud or abuse:DCEO Office of Community Assistance, Attn: Fraud Unit, 500 E. Monroe St., Springfield, IL 62701

Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE