



OFFICE OF POLICY, PROCEDURES, AND TRAINING

James K. Whelan, Executive Deputy Commissioner

Adam Waitzman, Assistant Deputy Commissioner
Office of Procedures

POLICY BULLETIN #21-62 OPE
LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLD WATER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHWAP)

| <p>Date: December 20, 2021</p> | <p>Subtopic: Water Arrears</p> |
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| <p>New Benefit Program</p> | <p>The purpose of this policy bulletin is to advise Family Independence Administration (FIA) Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), Job Center, and Non-Cash Assistance (NCA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Center staff and HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) staff of the opening of a new benefit program, the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP). The program is authorized through the Continuing Appropriations Act of 2021 and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to provide benefits to low income households which pay a high proportion of their incomes for drinking water and wastewater services. On December 1, 2021, LIHWAP benefits became available to assist low income New York City households which have past due bills (arrears) for drinking water and/or wastewater services. LIHWAP is centrally administered by the New York State Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (OTDA). Individuals cannot apply for this program through HRA.</p> <p>LIHWAP benefits will be based on the actual amount of drinking water and/or wastewater arrears, up to a maximum of \$2,500 per drinking water or wastewater provider, or \$5,000 if drinking water and wastewater services are combined, per applicant household. Benefits will be paid directly to the household's drinking water and/or wastewater vendor(s).</p> <p>Eligibility for LIHWAP benefits will be based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income, • household size, and • amount owed to the drinking water and/or wastewater provider(s). <p>Applicants may be eligible for a benefit if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant or members of their household are U.S. Citizens, U.S. Nationals, or qualified aliens; and, |

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- Either 1) their household's gross monthly income is at or below the current income guidelines used for the HEAP for their household size; or 2) they receive HEAP, SNAP, CA, or Code A Supplemental Security Income (SSI Living Alone) benefits; and,
- They pay a vendor directly for drinking water and/or wastewater usage; and,
- Their drinking water, wastewater, or combined drinking water and wastewater account is twenty (20) days or more past the due date, they have a water lien that is levied on their local property taxes, or their drinking water, wastewater, or combined drinking water and wastewater service is terminated or otherwise facing disconnection due to unpaid arrears.

In December 2021, the LIHWAP application became available for download on the OTDA LIHWAP website at:

<https://otda.ny.gov/programs/water-assistance/>. Households are also able to apply through an online portal. Applications should be completed by the person who has primary and direct responsibility for payment of the drinking water, wastewater, or combined drinking water and wastewater bill. Primary applicants must provide:

- Proof of identity
- Proof of residence
- Documentation of earned and unearned income
- A drinking water, wastewater, or combined drinking water and wastewater bill listing their permanent and primary residence
- A valid Social Security Number (SSN)
 - SSNs of additional household members will be requested

LIHWAP benefits will be issued directly by OTDA through the Statewide Financial System (SFS) via a new online state portal outside of the Welfare Management System (WMS) and OTDA'S benefit issuance control systems. As a result, FIA staff will neither have access to LIHWAP benefit issuance information, nor responsibility for the administration of LIHWAP benefits.

FIA staff may respond to inquiries they receive from the public about the new program by sharing the New York State LIHWAP Overview (**Attachment A**), which provides information on this new benefit and how to apply. For more information, individuals can refer to the LIHWAP information page at: <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/water-assistance/> or email the LIHWAP Bureau at: NYSLIHWAP@otda.ny.gov. OTDA is also establishing a call center that will answer questions related to the application process and eligibility requirements for these benefits. (OTDA will provide the call center number as soon as it is active.)

Effective Immediately

LIHWAP Information:
New York State
Overview, website, and
email

Reference:
GIS 21 TA/DC077

Attachment:
Attachment A New York State LIHWAP Overview

New York State Low Income Household Water Assistance Program

Do you need help paying for overdue water and wastewater bills?

The Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) can help.

LIHWAP is a drinking water and wastewater emergency assistance program funded through new federal resources. Benefits are based on the amount of unpaid water and wastewater bills owed by applicants. This assistance is targeted at low income households and income guidelines will mirror that of the Home Energy Assistance Program.

LIHWAP benefits are based on the actual amount of drinking water and/or wastewater arrears, up to a maximum of \$2,500 per drinking water or wastewater provider, or \$5,000 if drinking water and wastewater services are combined, per household. Benefits are paid directly to the household's drinking water and/or wastewater vendor(s).

Eligibility and benefits are based on:

- income,
- household size,
- household includes a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or qualified alien, and
- amount owed to drinking water and/or wastewater provider(s).

Primary applicants must provide:

- Proof of identity
- Proof of residence
- Documentation of earned and unearned income
- A drinking water, wastewater, or combined drinking water and wastewater bill listing their permanent and primary residence
- A valid Social Security Number (SSN)
 - SSNs of additional household members will be requested

For more information, visit <https://otda.ny.gov/LIHWAP>

