



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Wastewater News

Environmental Services

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Iowa Announces New Water Assistance Program for Low-Income Households

In response to the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress has authorized a number of programs to help alleviate related financial burdens for low-income households. As part of this effort, a new national water assistance program will launch in early fall that will provide funds for qualifying households who have fallen behind on payments for drinking and wastewater services and are facing, or have already experienced, disconnection from their water supply. This program, the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program, or LIHWAP, will be administered by the [Iowa Department of Human Rights \(DHR\)](#) and by the 16 Community Action Agencies throughout Iowa. These agencies will work closely with Community Water Suppliers (aka Vendors) to ensure program benefits are administered quickly and correctly to resolve water crisis issues for eligible households.

Iowa has been awarded just over \$10,000,000 to administer LIHWAP, and the vast majority of that money is targeted toward household benefit payments. However, per federal regulations, households *cannot* receive these payments directly. Rather, the payments have to be made directly to Vendors on behalf of the households. To receive these payments, Vendors must agree to the Terms & Conditions set by both state and federal regulations. Primarily, this will require Vendors to share information on rates/amounts owed (when necessary) and to provide confirmation that payments issued are received and appropriate action is taken on the household's account. By agreeing to these terms, Vendors can ensure that payment will be received for any household approved for LIHWAP benefits, thereby reducing the overall number of accounts with outstanding balances and resulting in fewer disconnections. This makes it a win-win for households and Vendors!

To be eligible for LIHWAP benefits, a household's countable income must be at or below 200% of the current Federal Poverty Guidelines, a water burden must exist (past-due balance, disconnect notice), and the household must demonstrate a legal status that allows for receipt of federal benefits (social security number or I-94 number).

Applications will be made through local Community Action Agencies and, once approved, Vendors will be notified of the approval and the amount to be paid on behalf of the household. DHR anticipates a high level of interest for LIHWAP assistance throughout Iowa as both homeowners and renters will be eligible for benefits. But,

without the cooperation and support of Vendors, agencies will be unable to adequately meet the needs of the communities they serve due to the inability to issue payments to the households themselves. This illustrates how crucial the relationship between local agencies and Vendors will be to the success of this program, and we are asking for help in making sure LIHWAP impacts as many lowans as possible. In the coming weeks, Vendors will likely be contacted by program staff at local agencies to discuss LIHWAP and the Vendor Agreement. We greatly appreciate Vendors being receptive to this outreach and open to working with agencies to resolve accounts for LIHWAP-approved households. Together, we can truly make a difference for low-income households in Iowa experiencing severe financial distress due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information on the LIHWAP program, or to request a copy of the Vendor Agreement to initiate participation in the program, please contact your local [Community Action Agency](#) or the [Division of Community Action Agencies at Iowa DHR](#).

FY 2022 Intended Use Plan Q2 Updates Approved

The Iowa Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) approved the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Intended Use Plans (IUP) second quarter update for fiscal year 2022 (July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022). The Commission took the action on September 21, 2021 during their meeting.

[Clean Water State Revolving Fund](#)

[Drinking Water State Revolving Fund](#)

For more information, please contact Theresa Enright, SRF Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-725-0498 or theresa.enright@dnr.iowa.gov.

Operator Certification: Continuing Education Opportunities

Online and virtual training opportunities are being created and offered through community colleges, state industry associations, national industry associations, EPA, and other state industry partners. All operators should continue to monitor their emails and the Training Calendar on the [Iowa DNR Operator Certification Database](#). Look at the calendar often, as there are new opportunities posted throughout the week.

Please contact Laurie Sharp at (515) 725-0284 with any questions concerning operator certification training.