Water Assistance Program - FAQs

1. **What is the Water Assistance Program?**

On December 27, 2020, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 was signed into law. This authorizing legislation included funding in emergency spending to assist low-income households with water and wastewater bills. On March 11, 2021, additional funding was appropriated in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) of 2021 in emergency spending to assist low-income households with water and wastewater bills.

The Department of Workforce Services is the state pass-through agency for this funding and it will be administered through the Housing and Community Development Division - State Community Services Office.

2. **When will the program start?**

The program is being aligned with the HEAT program seasons and will be open for applications starting October 1st. The month of October is designated for outreach and target groups. This means that in October we will only be processing applications for households with at least one member that is 60+, disabled, or under 6 years old. This aligns with HEAT Program application procedures.

3. **When will the program be open to the general public?**

November 1, 2021

4. **What can the program pay for?**

The program can pay for four types of water fees/bills -

- Drinking water
- Wastewater
- Storm water
- Ground water

The program will also pay for other fees or arrearages if it is required to restore water services or prevent water shut-off for the household.

5. **Is this an on-going program?**

No, this is a time-limited program that will end September 30, 2023. A household may only receive benefit assistance from the program once in a program season (October-September).

6. **How can I apply for this program?**

We are aligning processes with the HEAT Program. The current HEAT application will be updated to include water. If a household is found eligible for HEAT, they may be categorically

eligible for Water Assistance as well. A customer can apply the same way they apply for HEAT - a mailed in paper application, walk-in to a local HEAT office (if they are taking walk-ins), online application through MyCase login, or over the telephone. Customers will be encouraged to apply for both programs at the same time.

The HEAT agencies will also determine eligibility for the Water Assistance Program.
HEAT Agencies:

- Bear River Association of Governments
- Futures Through Training
- Utah Community Action
- Mountainland Association of Governments
- Southeastern Association of Local Governments
- Six County Association of Governments
- Uintah Basin Association of Governments
- Five County Association of Governments

7. What are the eligibility requirements?

The income eligibility requirements are the same as the HEAT Program. These are some other basic eligibility requirements:

- 150% FPL
- U.S. Citizen or LPR
- Utah resident
- Responsible for their own water bill/costs

8. What is the maximum benefit a household can receive?

There are three priority groups with this program -

1. Households whose water has been disconnected/shut off
2. Households with a shut off notice and are in danger of water disconnection
3. Households that do not meet the first two groups, but need assistance with a current bill

The first six months of the program will only be open to households that meet the first two priority groups. Arrearages and fees will be paid for in the exact amount in order to get water service restored or a shut-off threat removed. The goal of the program is to restore water service and prevent water shut-offs.

Within the first six months, the program will re-evaluate the affordability of serving the third priority group. If the third priority group is served, the maximum benefit a household can receive is $360. This will be based on a benefit matrix that calculates the benefit based on income level, water burden, and target group credit.

8. How are benefits paid out?

Benefits can only be paid directly to a water company. Unlike in the HEAT Program, there are no circumstances where a benefit can be paid to a customer. In order for a water company to get paid the benefit on behalf of the customer, we must have a water provider (vendor) agreement on file and they must be known to the state FINET system.

9. What outreach efforts will be made to get the word out about the program?

We plan on conducting a social media campaign to advertise the program. We have held two stakeholder meetings with water providers in the state. Fliers and rack cards will be sent to water providers to include in their mailings. The program will be added to 211 as a resource. Fliers/rack cards will be shared with other DWS divisions to advertise to customers.