

Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Who is eligible for water/wastewater assistance?

Renters, homeowners, and residents of public housing are all eligible for the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program.

The most important factor in determining who is eligible for water/wastewater assistance is how much money you made in the last 30 days. Our income eligibility guidelines are below:

Income Eligibility

Income Eligibility Limits

Effective July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022

(Based on 60% of the Maryland State Median Income Level)

Household Size (Number of Household Members)	Maximum Gross Monthly Income Standards (Household Income Before Taxes)
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1	\$3,121 / month
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2	\$4,081 / month
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3	\$5,041 / month
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4	\$6,000 / month
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5	\$6,962 / month
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6	\$7,922 / month
7	\$8,102 / month
8	\$8,283 / month
For Each Additional Person, Add	\$180 / month

Q. How Can I apply?

If you need to apply for water and/or wastewater assistance, you do not need to submit your application in person, there are other ways to submit your application safely.

Online

- You can apply online by visiting: mydmthink.maryland.gov
- Remember to upload all of your documents along with your application.
- Submitting your documents separately from your online application will delay your application

Drop Boxes

Energy Assistance offices and Local Departments of Social Services have secure drop boxes available to receive your application and documents.

- First, download and print the [Application for Water Assistance \(LIHWAP\)](#).
- You can also request a paper application by calling **1-800-332-6347** or by contacting your local Department of Social Services or OHEP office.
- Next, complete your application and gather your documents. You can find a list of documents that you should include in your application here: [Acceptable Documents](#)
- Once you have your completed application and documents, take them to your local office's drop box and submit them.

Mail-in Applications

To apply by mail, you can request an application be mailed to you, or print a copy of the application and mail it, along with copies of all your documents to your local Energy Assistance or Local Department of Social Services office. To see a full list of locations please visit:

[Office of Home Energy Programs Locations](#)

[Department of Social Services Locations](#)

Telephone

Energy Assistance and Local Department of Social Services offices can accept applications over the phone. However, you will need to email or mail your documents to the local office after your information has been taken. Documents needed for your application do not need to be scanned, we can accept clear pictures of your documents where text is visible.

In-person

Call your local office to schedule an appointment. To see a full list of locations please visit:

[Office of Home Energy Programs Locations](#)

[Department of Social Services Locations](#)

Q. What do I need to apply?

OHEP provides assistance to help you afford your water and/or wastewater bills. The benefit provided is based on your household income, how many people live in your household, and the arrearage amount owed on your water and/or wastewater account. Applications will be processed first come first served in each local jurisdiction until funding is depleted. To determine your benefit, OHEP needs information to prove:

- Your identity: We can accept any government-issued photo ID
- Who lives in your household: We will need social security cards or other federal government-issued documents (like a W-2 or Social Security Benefits Notice) with name and Social Security Name. Includes children living in the household.
- Your water and/or wastewater utility information: we will need a copy of your utility bill /or termination notice (if applicable) and the arrearage balance due on your account.
(Arrearages are defined as balance 30 days or more past due)

- Your household's income: We will need documentation of all income for everyone in your household. Documents can include: paystubs, social security award letters, pension statements, award letters for programs such as SNAP, TCA and TDAP
- For a full list of documents we can accept, please visit:
[Acceptable Documents](#)
- Your household may be categorically income eligible for LIHWAP if at least one household member listed on the application is currently receiving one of the following benefits at the time of application:
 - Office of Home Energy Programs (MEAP)
 - Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)
 - Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP)
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
 - Means-Tested veterans benefits
 - Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

Households with proof of receiving one of these benefits, at the time of application, will be determined eligible for the Maryland Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP). Benefits received must be verified. Only one bill account per service address is eligible to receive this water and/or wastewater benefit. LIHWAP is not an auto enrollment program, therefore to be eligible for the LIHWAP program, an application must be submitted and must meet all LIHWAP eligibility criteria.

Q. Can water/wastewater assistance help with an old bill?

Water/Wastewater Assistance can help you pay down an outstanding balance on your past due water and/or wastewater bill. We are able to assist with terminated or closed accounts as long as all eligibility criteria is met. We are also able to pay on arrearages to help prevent termination or re-establish water and/or wastewater services.

Q. Will my payment plan affect my utility assistance?

No. The Office of Home Energy Programs works closely with all Maryland utilities and water/wastewater companies to make sure our team is getting the most up-to-date balances on every applicant's account. Your payment plan will not prevent you from receiving the full benefit you qualify for.

Q. Do I need to wait for a turn off notice?

No! Do not wait until you have a turn off notice to apply! We can help prevent you from receiving a turn off notice if you apply before you receive one.

Q. How can my benefits be used?

LIHWAP Water and/or Wastewater Assistance grants can be used to pay for:

- Restoration of services to households that have had water and/or wastewater services disconnected due to arrearages. (arrearages are defined as balance past due 30 days or greater)
- Prevention of disconnection for households at risk of disconnection due to arrearages.
- Standard charges and fees included in the household water and/or wastewater bill. This includes standard billing and reconnection fees.

Q. Can I give you some of my paperwork now, and the rest later?

Submitting an application without all of your documents will slow down the application process significantly. For the quickest service, please include all of your documents when you submit your application, no matter how you submit your application.

Q. Does the utility provider automatically know I have applied for water and/or wastewater assistance?

Unfortunately, utilities do not automatically know that you are applying for water and/or wastewater assistance. Utilities are notified that you are working with the Office of Home Energy Programs eligibility has been determined and there is a commitment to paying certain amounts to your utility account.

Q. My utilities are included in my rent, do I still qualify?

Yes! You can receive water and/or wastewater assistance benefits if you or a member of your household is responsible for paying for your water and/or wastewater costs. Your water bill does not have to be in your name, however, you must verify you are living at the service address and LIHWAP benefits must be paid directly to a public water supplier or treatment works. Your landlord will have to be able to break out the direct water costs separate from your rent and agree to have the LIHWAP benefit paid directly to the water supplier. You may be eligible for LIHWAP assistance if all other eligibility requirements are met.

Q. How do I check the status of my application?

Visit <https://myohepstatus.org> to see the status of your application. Since this site is updated when your local office has started working on your application, please allow 15 days for your application to show up on the site. You can also call the DHS call center at **1-800-332-6347** or your local office for updated information.

Q. How long will it be until I receive my benefits?

Every application is different because every household is different. If there are issues with the documents you provided with your application, there will be a delay as your local office tries to contact you. We are required to:

- Review your application and documents within 14 days after we receive a complete application (this includes all supporting documents so if you do not submit all of your documents with your application, this 14 day clock will not start until we get everything from you)
- Process and make a final determination about your application within 45 days of receiving your full application packet.

Q. Where can I drop off my application?

All OHEP offices and Local Departments of Social Services have secured drop-boxes to receive your application. You can find your local office by visiting:

[Office of Home Energy Programs Locations](#)

[Department of Social Services Locations](#)

Q. Are your offices open for walk-in appointments?

While most local offices are open to the public, we request that you make an appointment so that we can safely provide you with the support that you need.

Always call ahead to your local office to find out their process for handing in-person applications.

Q. Where do I apply?

You can apply for water and/or wastewater assistance [online](#) or by contacting your local Energy Assistance or Department of Social Services office. If you do not have access to apply online, you can print out the [LIHWAP application](#), complete it and return to your local Energy Assistance or Department of Social Services. A full list of offices can be found on our website:

[Office of Home Energy Locations](#)

[Department of Social Services Locations](#)

Q. Can I apply in another county to get faster service?

Your water assistance application must be processed by your local office. If you submit your application to another office in another county, it will cause a delay in processing your application as it is sent to the right office. Your application will only be processed when the application was received by the correct office in your local jurisdiction.

Q. Why is my water/wastewater bill so high?

There are a lot of reasons why your bill may be high since every home is different, some common reasons for high bills are:

- You may use a lot of water and/or wastewater
- There may be a lot of people in your household
- You may be paying off old balances on your account
- Your home may have leaks or problems with plumbing which could cause increased water and/or wastewater usage

You can find out more about what is driving up your water and/or wastewater bill by checking your bill each month. Most utility companies show you how much water and/or wastewater you're using

each month on your bill, with many providing periodic reports showing your water and/or wastewater usage.

Q. How do I get my service turned on again?

Call your local OHEP or DSS office to request an application and call your utility to discuss the status of your account. When you speak with the local OHEP or DSS office, tell them that your water and/or wastewater service has been turned off.

You may need additional resources to restore water and/or wastewater service if the Water Assistance (LIHWAP) grant is not enough. You may have to work with your utility provider to make additional arrangements to pay the remaining balance on your account. In light of the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, the majority of Maryland utility companies are offering payment plans. You may be required to establish a payment plan if the LIHWAP grant doesn't cover the full arrearage balance in order to be eligible to receive the LIHWAP grant.

If water and/or wastewater assistance alone cannot have your service turned back on, you may be eligible for additional resources to pay off your water and/or wastewater bill:

- Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)
- Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)
- Emergency grants from Social Services
- Local faith-based community resources
- Other sources identified by assisting agencies

Q. Does Water/Wastewater Assistance pay the whole bill?

Water assistance benefits range from \$100-\$2,000. In order to qualify for water assistance, the service address must have a minimum arrearage balance of \$100. Benefits can be paid towards arrearages (30 days or more past due) and normal billing fees including reconnection fees. These benefits can significantly reduce or eliminate old balances on your account and lower your bill moving forward. Benefits will not necessarily cover your entire bill.

Q. How will you contact me about my application?

We will send you letters if we need information from you and to let you know the final status of your application. Some offices may also call you to ask for more information about your application.

Q. What is a household?

“Household” means an individual or group of individuals who are living together as one unit and for whom residential water and/or wastewater is customarily purchased in common or who make undesignated payments for water and/or wastewater in the form of rent.

Q. What income is included in determining eligibility for water/wastewater assistance?

Income eligibility is based on all gross (before taxes and other deductions) income received by everyone in the household over the age of 18 during the 30 days preceding the date of application. Income for full-time students is not counted as income if the student’s full-time status is documented.

If an applicant receives income monthly from SSI, SSA, wages or a pension, but the income is received within the month, but not received within 30 days, the income is still counted. Example: If the employee applies on April 1st and the last paycheck was received on March 1st, that paycheck is counted.

Q. How do I document my income if I am self-employed?

Your most recent tax form Schedule SE is the best and easiest way to document your income if you are self-employed. Your income reported on the Schedule SE will be divided by 12 to get your 30-day income. In addition to the tax form, self-employed individuals must also complete and sign the [Income Verification of Self-Employment Form](#)

If you have not paid taxes but are self-employed, your income must still be documented. You can provide weekly, monthly and/or quarterly books/statements, ledgers, sales slips, cancelled checks, invoices, bank statements/deposits for the last 30 days.

Q. What if I do not have income for the 30 days before my application?

All household members 18 and over who claim zero income was received for the last 30-day application period must complete a [Declaration of Zero Income form](#). A [Household Worksheet](#) must be completed to document how your household is meeting basic needs during the time of having no income. If it is indicated on the Household Worksheet that someone is assisting you in meeting the household’s basic needs a [Resource Provider Statement](#) must be completed.

Q. What is income categorical eligibility?

A household where at least one member of the household is receiving one of the following benefits at the time of application will be categorically eligible for LIHWAP.

- Office of Home Energy Programs (MEAP)
- Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Means-tested veterans benefits
- Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

Applicants who are income categorically eligible for LIHWAP must be actively receiving benefits at the time of the LIHWAP application and must meet all other eligibility criteria.

Benefits received must be verified and all other eligibility requirements for LIHWAP must be met.

Q. I received a LIHWAP arrearage grant before, am I eligible for another?

LIHWAP is a one-time benefit that can pay towards arrearages that are past due 30 days or more on a water and/or wastewater account. The benefit can also be paid to reduce the risk of termination or to re-establish water and/or wastewater service. The grant amount ranges from \$100-\$2,000 per household. A household may apply for water and wastewater together or separately, however, no more than \$2,000 combined will be paid towards the household water and/or wastewater account(s). A household could potentially submit two applications (one for water and one for wastewater) but will only have a combined benefit of no more than \$2,000 per household. Your arrearage balance must be a minimum of \$100.