



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

**ROY COOPER** • Governor

**MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH** • Secretary

**SUSAN OSBORNE** • Assistant Secretary for County Operations for  
Human Services

September 16, 2021

**DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

**ATTENTION:** DIRECTORS, ENERGY MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

**SUBJECT:** Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)

**Priority:** Assistance Requested

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (CAA) enacted on December 27, 2020, and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) enacted on March 3, 2021, provided funds for the establishment of a new emergency water and wastewater assistance program. This is a temporary program where funds must be spent by September 30, 2023; there is not a permanent authorization for the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP). LIHWAP provides emergency assistance to low-income households, particularly those with the lowest of incomes that pay a high proportion of their household income for drinking and wastewater services. The funds must be paid to owners or operators of public water systems or treatment works to reduce arrearage of and rates charged to eligible households.

There has been a workgroup established with staff from DHHS and the Directors for the local county Division of Social Services (DSS) to develop our state's policies and procedures for LIHWAP. The North Carolina LIHWAP Model Plan was submitted August 9, 2021 and revised based on feedback from our federal partners on September 10, 2021. We are currently awaiting approval on our plan and will be actively engaged in developing policy and training based on that approval.

In the meantime, the group has been working with the UNC School of Government to reach out to the over 500 water and wastewater vendors in North Carolina to ensure they are aware of the program. Last week a webinar was held by the UNC School of Government for water and wastewater vendors. There were approximately 178 people on the webinar, but it is uncertain how many of the attendees were vendors. A recording of that call is included in a link below. During that call, the vendors were asked if they would be willing to provide information about their current status through a link that was provided to them. As of today, we have received information from several vendors, but the reach has not been as great as we hoped.

**NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

We need your help in reaching out to the water and wastewater vendors in your county to obtain information that will assist us in allocating enough funds to cover constituents in your county who are in Priority Group 1 (have already had their services disconnected) or Priority Group 2 (are in danger of having their services disconnected).

Here is what we are asking:

Reach out to the water and wastewater vendors in your county to establish a relationship, share with them the information that follows in this letter, and provide them with the documents that are needed to be completed to get them set up as a vendor and to share data. [Click here](#) to see the list of vendors from the UNC School of Government; please note that the contact information on this list may be out of date.

1. Ask the vendor if they would complete this [Vendor Data Collection Survey Tool](#). If they are unwilling to complete the survey, please consider gathering as much information as you can and completing it on their behalf. I have attached a PDF version in case you want to go over it with them, the tool asks the following questions:
  - a. Vendor contact information (name, phone number, email address)
  - b. The type of vendor (water, wastewater, both)
  - c. The organizations' FEIN number
  - d. What counties they operate in
  - e. If they are under a moratorium and, if they are, when they expect to resume disconnections. It also asks as of September 1, 2021 how many households have been disconnected for failure to pay their bill, and what the total amount owed is on those accounts.
  - f. As of September 1, 2021, how many households are in danger of having their water or wastewater services disconnected before January 1, 2022, and what the total amount owed is for 30 days past due and 60 days past due.
  - g. If their bill includes reconnection fees and any other municipal services (such as trash) and the average cost for both.
  - h. If they are willing to sign a Vendor Service Agreement (attached to this document) and if they are willing to share data through a data sharing agreement (also attached to this document).
2. If the vendor has questions, share this link for them to submit their questions, we are working on a FAQ document that will be posted both on the UNC School of Government website and an upcoming state LIHWAP website. [LIHWAP Vendor Question Submission Form](#)
3. Until the North Carolina website is available, share with the vendor the link to the federal [LIHWAP](#) website.
4. Share with them the Vendor Service Agreement (attached to this letter) and ask them to complete and return to you. Once you have received the Vendor Service Agreement, take the appropriate steps to approve and then upload the information into NC FAST.

We are planning on doing an “auto” payment for categorically eligible customers who are in priority group 1 or 2, as long as we have the data from the vendors that we can use to match against NC FAST. You can share the Data Sharing Agreement attached to this letter with the vendor and ask them to complete the form and return to you. Attached to this letter is the format that the vendor would use to return the information back to us. Additional information about sharing the data will be sent in the next couple of weeks.

Two webinars have been scheduled next week. The first will be held on Tuesday September 21, 10-11 am. To register:

Please register for Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) on Sep 21, 2021 10:00 AM EDT at:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4538019157085487630>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

The second will be held on Thursday September 23, 3-4 pm. To register:

Please register for Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) II on Sep 23, 2021 3:00 PM EDT at:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5257090965558052622>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

If you have any questions, please send them to the Operational Support Team (OST) at [DSS.Policy.Questions@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:DSS.Policy.Questions@dhhs.nc.gov).

Sincerely,



Carla West

Senior Director for Economic Security

Division of Social Services, Economic and Family Services Section

Attachments:

- Vendor Service Agreement
- Vendor Data Sharing Agreement
- Vendor Data Sharing Format

**EFS-75-2021**