

November 22, 2021

Missouri Citizen, Contracted Agencies, and Utility Companies:

Below is an update on the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) and the impact to Missouri citizens, contracted agencies (process applications), and utility companies (suppliers). The Department of Social Services (DSS) continues to be dedicated to the implementation of LIHWAP; however, there were some unforeseen circumstances, which delayed the program start date. At this time, DSS expects the automated data processing system that processes applications, makes pledges (agrees to pay) to utility companies, and sends letters to be fully developed in February 2022.

Contracted agencies began receiving elderly and disabled applications on October 1<sup>st</sup>, and applications for other households beginning November 1<sup>st</sup>. These applications have not been entered into the automated data processing system since the federal reporting requirements and additional changes were put into place on October 22<sup>nd</sup>. These requirements now include:

- Allow for the payment of other items included on the water and/or wastewater bill if this is required for continued or restoration of services. For example, if trash is also included, it is allowable to pay this cost. This also must be reported separately.
- Federal reporting previously included only the amount of payments for water and wastewater, but now requires reporting for disconnection, current bill, or arrearage for water, wastewater, and multiple services.

### **Impact**

- Missouri Citizens: If an application was already submitted, the contracted agency will reach out to get updated amounts due or any other changes to the application when the system is ready to process the application. Payments to suppliers cannot be made until the system is implemented.
- Contracted Agencies: Agencies will reach out on current applications after the program begins. Agencies will not accept new applications until February 2022, or when the program begins.
- Utility Companies: Companies will continue to return supplier agreements or payments cannot be made.

DSS continues to conduct outreach to utility companies and currently has 250 agreements out of 1,135 possible agreements. DSS cannot make LIHWAP payments without an agreement, and the federal requirements does not allow for payments directly to the applicant.

For more information on LIHWAP, or the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, go to: <https://mydss.mo.gov/utility-assistance>. Thank you for your patience as DSS continues to implement this new program.

AUXILIARY AIDS AND SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

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