

## Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)

**What:** The LIHWAP helps eligible households pay water and sewer bills to restore or maintain access to drinking water and wastewater services and is funded through two federal appropriations.

It is administered in the Commonwealth by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Local service delivery is provided by 20 local administrating agencies (LAAs) that also administer the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

It is intended to restore service, pay toward arrearages of water and wastewater services, and assist in the reduction of the cutomers' rates in the federal fiscal year 2023 (October 1, 2022, through September 30, 2023).

**Who:** This program will serve income eligible customers who are directly billed for their service(s). Though the program name includes *low income*, the income guidelines are broad, serving households who would not generally be considered low income. For example, a household of four can have an annualized gross income of up to \$81,561. The annualization of a household's income is almost always based on four weeks of a household's income. Refer to the attached [income-eligibility-and-benefit-levels chart](#)<sup>1</sup> for an overview of potential benefits and income limits by household size.

**How:** One application serves as the application for both LIHEAP and LIHWAP programs. Households can [apply online](#)<sup>2</sup> or via appointment.

**Where:** Applications are taken by [20 local administrating agencies](#)<sup>3</sup> (LAAs) that cover the entirety of Massachusetts.

**Vendor Notification and Billing:** Initially, each vendor will be required to sign a vendor agreement and complete a vendor information sheet, returning both to the LAA in order for their customers to be paid.

Eligible customer information will regularly upload to a vendor-specific online portal when a direct-billed water and/or wastewater service customer is determined to be LIHWAP eligible and has provided their vendor information. The vendor will be notified of the initial upload. The vendor will then need to enter whether the account is active; if inactive, is it the result of non-payment; whether the account is in arrears; and, if yes, what is the amount in arrears; and and what are the services provided. Initially, only those accounts that are marked as in arrears will be paid. Any account holder/account number/service address mismatch will need to be corrected in order for a payment to be made.

Once the data is entered by the vendor, the LAA will send payment to the vendor within 30 days.

1. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/lihwap-income-eligibility-benefit-chart-1232023/download>
2. <https://toapply.org/MassLIHEAP>
3. <https://hedfuel.azurewebsites.net>



Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Maura T. Healey, Governor ♦ Kimberley Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor ♦ Jennifer D. Maddox, Undersecretary

**LIHWAP Information Memorandum  
IM 2023-01**

**To:** LIHWAP Executive and Program Directors  
**FROM:** Edward Kiely, Community Services Unit Manager  
**SUBJECT:** Updates to the Massachusetts LIHWAP  
**DATE:** February 9, 2023

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is issuing this Information Memorandum (IM) to provide Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) related updates to the LIHWAP local administrating agencies (LAAs).

**BACKGROUND**

After a public comment period, a revised LIHWAP Model State Plan was submitted by DHCD to the US Health and Human Services, Office of Community Services (OCS) in November 2022. The amended plan was subsequently approved by OCS on January 19, 2023.

**UPDATE**

The key change to the Model State Plan is the issuance of a flat benefit of up to \$450 to LIHWAP eligible households directly billed for water and wastewater service whether they have an arrearage or are current on their bill. This is in effort to reduce the rate of their services.

Households that are disconnected for being in arrears or are in arrears and at risk for termination with drinking water and wastewater utilities will continue to be a priority. The maximum arrearage benefit is currently \$1,500 for these households with past due bill(s). Those eligible households with active water and/or wastewater accounts may also be eligible for an additional flat benefit up to \$450 to reduce the rate of service(s). Payments are subject to availability of funds.

**CONCLUSION**

From time to time, DHCD will continue to offer guidance to the LAAs on the program documents when the need arises. **Please share this IM with all appropriate personnel within your agency as well as with your water/wastewater vendors.** If you have any questions regarding this communication, please contact [Edward.Kiely@mass.gov](mailto:Edward.Kiely@mass.gov).

We appreciate your continued commitment to the program.



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[www.bcacinc.org](http://www.bcacinc.org)

Welcome to the FY 2023 Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP).

For new vendors, a vendor agreement with related Information Memoranda (IMs) is enclosed. Please sign and return a copy of the agreement to us. If your agency signed an agreement in FY 2022, your agency does not need to sign a new vendor agreement; please review the IMs enclosed.

This program year, in addition to the arrearage benefit, all active accounts for eligible LIHWAP customers will receive a benefit up to \$450. No account arrearage is required to receive this rate-reduction benefit and it is not dependent upon the usage. All payments are made directly to your agency. No payments are made to the customers.

The LIHWAP vendor portal may be accessed through the following link:

<https://vendorportalfront.communitysoftwaregroup.com/>

If you have a question, contact Hope Dunn at (413)418-3659 or at [hdunn@bcacinc.org](mailto:hdunn@bcacinc.org)

Regards,

*Hope Dunn*