

HED: How to apply for help with your gas bill

Dealing with a mounting gas bill or shut-off notice can be scary, especially during the winter months. Several programs can offer assistance, but navigating them can be frustrating. They often have different income rules, and the applications can require you to submit multiple documents.

Agencies in each county check qualifications and help residents sign up for state utility-assistance programs. Most agencies will be requiring you to apply online or over the phone.

- There's one number to call and make an appointment: (216) 350-8008.
- You'll be asked to choose one of the two agencies in Cuyahoga County that handle applications.
 - [CHN Housing Partners](#)
 - [Schedule an appointment online](#)
 - Document drop box: **2999 Payne Ave., Cleveland**
 - Fax number (216) 912-0700
 - [Step Forward](#) (formerly Council for Economic Opportunities in Greater Cleveland)
 - [Schedule an appointment online](#)
 - Document drop box: **2203 Superior Ave., Cleveland**
 - Email documents: heapdocuments@stepforwardtoday.org

Applications can [also be downloaded here](#) and submitted by mail.

Energy Assistance Programs
P.O. Box 1240
Columbus, Ohio 43216

Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP):

How does PIPP work? Customers who qualify for PIPP pay 5% of their monthly income for gas and 5% for electricity. If a home is heated by electricity, the customer pays 10% of their monthly income for electricity, with a minimum of \$10.

Customers who make PIPP payments on time every month for 24 months can have their total balance eliminated.

You can be dropped from the PIPP program if you:

- Don't report a change in income—like making more money.
- Forget to verify your income at least once a year.
- Miss payments and don't catch up by your "anniversary date," which is when you enrolled in the program. *Hint: This date is printed on your bill.*

If you are dropped from the program, you will get billed for the full balance of what you would have owed.

Who is eligible? Ohioans who rent or own their homes and who make less than 175% of federal poverty guidelines, which for a family of four would be up to \$48,562 a year. Customers must receive their gas or electricity from private utilities such as the Illuminating Company or Dominion, not public utilities such as Cleveland Public Power.

What paperwork do you need? Proof of income for the last 30 days for people who live in the home, except for minors.

How to apply: Customers can apply by mail, online at energyhelp.ohio.gov or with a local energy assistance provider ([listed above](#)).

Customers must fill out the application, which is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), and provide:

- Your most recent gas and/or electric bills.

- A list of people who live in the home and their birth dates and Social Security numbers.
- Proof of income, such as paycheck stubs, for anyone in the house who is over 18 and working.
- Proof of citizenship or legal residency for all household members. Acceptable documents include a birth certificate, Social Security card, voter registration card or passport.

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP):

What is HEAP? A federal program run by the state that helps with a once-yearly benefit to help pay off an electric or gas bill. Cleveland Public Power accepts HEAP payments.

Who is eligible?: Ohioans in households living at or below 175% federal poverty guidelines, or \$48,562 for a family of four.

How to apply: Call or go online with your local [Energy Assistance Provider](#). In Cuyahoga County, that's Step Forward or CHN Housing Partners. You can also apply online at energyhelp.ohio.gov, or [by mail](#).

What paperwork do you need? The same documentation as above.

HEAP Winter/Summer Crisis Programs:

What are these programs? They are branches of the HEAP program that are available once per winter (Nov. 1-March 31) and summer (July 1-Sept. 30).

Who is eligible? Ohioans in households living at or below 175% of the federal poverty guidelines. These guidelines are accurate through May 2023.

The Winter Crisis program additionally requires you to have been disconnected from your utility or have less than a 25% supply of bulk fuel in your tank.

The Summer Crisis program additionally requires you to have a household member who is either:

- 60 years of age and older
- Households who have a disconnect notice, have been shut off or are trying to establish new electric service.

How to apply: Contact your local [Energy Assistance Provider](#). In Cuyahoga County, that's Step Forward or CHN Housing Partners.

What paperwork do you need? Same as above with HEAP.

Winter Payment and Reconnection Plans

Ohio requires [these plans](#) to be offered to all residential gas and electric customers (not including Cleveland Public Power) from October to April 15, **regardless of income**. Cleveland Public Power voluntarily participates in what utilities refer to as the “winter rules.” Contact your individual utility company to learn more about the individual plans.

- The Winter Heating Season Plan requires a customer to pay a third of their total bill balance each month.
- The “one-sixth plan” requires a customer to pay their past-due bill amount in six equal monthly payments in addition to each new bill amount.
- The “one-ninth plan” requires a customer to pay their past-due bill amount in nine equal monthly payments in addition to a monthly budget amount, based on estimated use.

Ohio requires utility companies to offer a [Special Reconnection Order](#) from mid-October to April 15. This order allows customers who have been disconnected or are being threatened with disconnection to pay \$175 to establish, maintain or restore their service, regardless of income.

Cleveland Public Power is exempt but voluntarily follows the rules.

- Once during the winter heating season, customers with overdue bills can be reconnected if they pay \$175 plus a reconnection fee that can't be more than \$36 for that month.

- Customers who want to start a new service can choose to be charged \$175 for a security deposit. Any amount higher than that can go on the next bill.
- Customers who are eligible for the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) can use that program to pay the \$175. For example, a family of four could make up to \$45,850 and be eligible. Check eligibility [here](#).

Dominion Energy's EnergyShare program:

Dominion's EnergyShare is described by the company as a "last resort" program administered by the Salvation Army for Dominion customers who have exhausted all other forms of aid, including HEAP.

- Eligible customers may apply for EnergyShare between Dec. 1, 2022, and May 31, 2023, for a max payment of \$300.
- Yearly gross household income must be at or below 175% of the federal poverty guidelines for eligibility, or \$48,562 for a household of four people; or if the head of household is unemployed, or if the applicant is experiencing financial hardship; or if the applicant has received a shutoff notice or service has already been disconnected.
- Apply by contacting the Salvation [Army office closest to where you live](#).

Columbia Gas of Ohio's HeatShare program

Like the EnergyShare program, Columbia Gas of Ohio's HeatShare program is described by the company as a "last resort" program that provides a one-time \$250 grant per calendar year. It is administered by the Salvation Army for Columbia Gas customers who have exhausted all other forms of aid such as HEAP.

- Families qualify if they have an annual gross household income at or below 150% of the federal poverty guidelines (or \$41,625 for a family of four).
- Households experiencing financial hardships may also be eligible for the program, determined on a "case-by-case basis," according to Columbia Gas.

- Apply by contacting the Salvation [Army office closest to where you live.](#)

Medical Certificates

Customers facing a disconnection may be eligible for a 30-day delay if a medical professional certifies that the disconnection would be a danger to the health of the customer or that they or a member of their household rely on life-supporting equipment such as oxygen.

- The medical professional must examine the customer and has to fully complete the medical certificate form, which you can find by going to the PUCO's website, <https://puco.ohio.gov/utilities/electricity/resources/30-day-medical-certificate>.
- The option can only be used three times in a 12-month period.

PRC: Prevention, Retention and Contingency

What is PRC? Parents, caregivers and expectant mothers can apply once a year for short-term emergency needs, including utility bills. Applicants must first apply to other programs for help. The payment is capped at \$1,500 per year.

Detailed information for Cuyahoga County applicants can be found [on the county's website](#).

Who is eligible? Applicants must earn 200% or less of the federal poverty guideline, which is \$55,500 for a family of four. Typically, approved applicants must not have more than \$1,000 in the bank or available, but certain exceptions may apply. Applicants need to provide documents showing proof of income, residency, minor children, and an attempt to apply to other programs. Those documents can be:

- Income: W-2 form or last two pay stubs
- Residency: A utility bill with a shut-off notice
 - Columbia Gas: A termination notice
 - Dominion/East Ohio Gas: Letter showing a shut-off notice or final bill
 - Illuminating Co./FirstEnergy: Disconnection notice statement
 - Cleveland Public Power: Bill with a past-due balance
 - Cleveland Water: Final notice or statement showing the account is in shut-off or delinquent status.
- Minor children: Birth certificate or Social Security card
- Application to other programs: Determination letter from the state

How to apply:

- [Download the application online](#), fill it out and email it—along with the required documents to Cuy-PRC-Application@jfs.ohio.gov or call (216) 987-7392 to leave a message requesting an application be mailed to you.
- Drop the completed application at a [Neighborhood Family Service Center in Cuyahoga County](#). For example, you can drop it off at Cuyahoga County's Workforce Opportunity Resource Center in Cleveland, at the Virgil E. Brown Building at 1641 Payne Avenue, Suite 120A.

HED: How to apply for help with your electric bill

Dealing with a mounting electric bill or shut-off notice can be scary, especially during the winter. Several programs offer assistance, but navigating them can be frustrating. They often have different income rules, and the applications can require you to submit multiple documents.

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You can be dropped from the PIPP program if you:

- Don't report a change in income—like making more money.

- Forget to verify your income at least once a year.
- Miss payments and don't catch up by your "anniversary date," or when you originally signed up.

If you are dropped from the program, you will get billed for the full balance of what you would have owed on your utility bill.

Who is eligible? Ohioans who rent or own their homes and who make less than 175% of federal poverty guidelines, which for a family of four would be \$48,562 or less.

Customers must receive electricity from private utilities, such as the Illuminating Company or Dominion, not public utilities such as Cleveland Public Power.

What paperwork do you need? Proof of income for the last 30 days for people who live in the home, except for minors.

How to apply: Customers can apply by mail, online at energyhelp.ohio.gov or with a local Energy Assistance Provider ([listed above](#)).

Customers will have to fill out the application, which is available in [English](#) or [Spanish](#), and provide:

- Most recent gas and/or electric bills.
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for private gas or electric customers, although Cleveland Public Power does accept HEAP payments.

Who is eligible?: Ohioans in households living at or below 175% federal poverty guidelines, or \$48,562 for a family of four.

How to apply: Call or go online with your local [Energy Assistance Provider](#). In Cuyahoga County, that's Step Forward or CHN Housing Partners. You can also apply online at energyhelp.ohio.gov or [by mail](#).

What paperwork do you need? The same documentation as above.

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The Winter Crisis program additionally requires you to have been disconnected from your utility or have less than a 25% supply of bulk fuel in your tank.

The Summer Crisis program additionally requires you to have a household member who is either:

- 60 years of age and older
- Households who have a disconnect notice, have been shut off or are trying to establish new electric service.

How to apply: Contact your local [Energy Assistance Provider](#). In Cuyahoga County, that's Step Forward or CHN Housing Partners.

What paperwork do you need? Same as above with HEAP.

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Cleveland Public Power is exempt but voluntarily follows the rules.

- Once during the winter heating season, customers with overdue bills can be reconnected if they pay \$175 plus a reconnection fee that can’t be more than \$36 for that month.
- Customers who want to start a new service can choose to be charged \$175 for a security deposit. Any amount higher than that can go on the next bill.
- Customers who are eligible for the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) can use that program to pay the \$175. For example, a family of four could make up to \$45,850 and be eligible. Check eligibility [here](#).

FirstEnergy/Illuminating Company

Customers are eligible for emergency hardship funds, up to a maximum grant of \$300 to customers who have had a disconnection notice or had their service disconnected.

- A customer must have a gross household income at or below 200% of the federal poverty guideline (which is \$55,500 for a family of four). The home must be individually metered, and the active account must be in the name of an adult resident in the household.
- Must first apply for the HEAP program
- Must have made a “good-faith payment” in the last 90 days.
- Documentation needed:
 - Copy of most recent electric bill
 - List of all household members’ birth dates and Social Security numbers
 - Proof of income for at least the last 30 days
 - Proof of all First Energy payments made in the last 90 days
 - Proof of application to HEAP program
- Apply by contacting your local [Energy Assistance Provider](#). In Cuyahoga County, that’s [Step Forward](#) or [CHN Housing Partners](#).

FirstEnergy does offer several additional benefits for people with family members who are active-duty military or who use electrically operated life-sustaining equipment in their home. Call 1-800-589-3101 for more details.

Cleveland Public Power

Cleveland utilities are not regulated by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, but the city follows the same “winter rules” for electric service.

Cleveland does not participate in the PIPP program.

- Customers can use a payment from the HEAP program, if they qualify, as a down payment to reconnect or maintain service.
- To learn more about payment plans, call (216) 664-2782.

Medical Certificates

Customers facing a disconnection may be eligible for a 30-day delay if a medical professional certifies that the disconnection would be a danger to the health of the customer or that they or a member of their household rely on life-supporting equipment such as an oxygen machine.

- The medical professional must examine the customer and fully complete the medical certificate form, which you can find by going to the PUCO's website,
<https://puco.ohio.gov/utilities/electricity/resources/30-day-medical-certificate>.
- The option can only be used three times in a 12-month period.

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Who is eligible? Applicants must earn 200% or less of the federal poverty guideline, which is \$55,500 for a family of four. Typically, approved applicants must not have more than \$1,000 in the bank or available, but certain exceptions may apply. Applicants need to provide documents showing proof of income, residency, minor children, and an attempt to apply to other programs. Those documents can be:

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HED: How to apply for help with your water or sewer bill

Dealing with a mounting water or sewer bills or shut-off notice can be scary, especially during the winter months. Several programs can offer assistance, but navigating them can be frustrating. They often have different income rules, and the applications can require you to submit multiple documents.

Water bill assistance: Low Income Water Assistance Program

The Low Income Water Assistance Program is a temporary federal program through at least September 2023 that provides relief to people behind on water and sewer bills.

Who is eligible? Ohioans at or below 200% of the federal poverty guideline who pay for their water and sewer bills. For a family of four that would be a yearly income of \$55,500

What paperwork is needed?

- Copies of your most recent water and sewer bills
- Photo ID
- Social Security cards for each household member
- Proof of U.S Citizenship or legal residency for each household member
- Income verification for the past 30 days or 12 months for each household member over age 18
- If you're a renter, a copy of your lease that shows you are responsible for water/sewer.

How to apply? Cuyahoga County residents can call (216) 350-8008 to make an appointment, or schedule online at:

- [CHN Housing Partners](#)
 - [Schedule an appointment online](#)
- [Step Forward](#) (formerly Council for Economic Opportunities in Greater Cleveland.)
 - [Schedule an appointment online](#)

Water and Sewer Affordability Program

CHN Housing Partners administers a water and sewer affordability program for the city of Cleveland's Division of Water and the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District. The program provides a 40% discount to homeowners on both their water and sewer bills.

Who is eligible? You must be at or below 250% of the federal poverty line, which is \$69,375 for a family of four. You must be a homeowner for the water affordability program. For the sewer affordability program, you can be a renter.

What paperwork is needed?

- Photo ID.
- Verification for household members (Social Security card preferred, or birth certificate)
- Documents to verify all income received in the last 60 days—pay stubs, benefit statements, etc.
- Copies of utility bills.
- Documentation of a hardship such as a job loss, medical expenses or something else that occurred within the past six months.
- Each year, you must re-verify your income in order to be eligible for a new year.

How to apply? Call CHN Housing Partners at (216) 774-2349 or go to <https://chnhousingpartners.org/utilityassistance/>.

Homestead Water and Sewer Program

The Cleveland Water Department and the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District offer a program that provides a lower fixed charge and consumption rate for their customers, run through the city's Department of Public Utilities.

Who is eligible?

- You must be 65 years or older or “totally and permanently disabled,” according to the city's definition. That means you have some “impairment in body or mind” that makes you unable to work for a period of at least 12 months or “indefinitely.”
- You must own and live at the home where the water or sewer bill is being sent.

- You must earn \$36,300 or less per-year.
- You must re-enroll every three years.
- You cannot be enrolled in the affordability program.

What paperwork is needed? If you have a disability, you must have your physician sign the application affirming that fact. Otherwise, no additional documents are required.

How to apply? Go to

<https://www.clevelandwater.com/customer-service/water-rates/discount-programs>

to download the application. Fill it out and send it to: Division of Water, Homestead Unit, P.O. Box 94687, Cleveland, Ohio 44101-4687.

Sewer Crisis Program

CHN also administers the sewer crisis program through the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District. It provides a one-time payment to people who have experienced a “hardship” within the last six months.

Customers of the sewer district can apply if they have documentation to prove the hardship. To apply, call CHN Housing Partners at (216) 774-2349 or go to <https://chnhousingpartners.org/utilityassistance/>

Medical Certificates

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Detailed information for Cuyahoga County applicants can be found [on the county's website](#).

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- Minor children: Birth certificate or Social Security card
- Application to other programs: Determination letter from the state

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- Drop the completed application at a [Neighborhood Family Service Center in Cuyahoga County](#). For example, you can drop it off at Cuyahoga County's Workforce Opportunity Resource Center in Cleveland, at the Virgil E. Brown Building at 1641 Payne Avenue, Suite 120A.

Tips for applying for assistance

Save copies of your bills or disconnection notices

Some programs will require proof your utility has been shut off or at risk of being disconnected. This could be an actual bill or a photo of the bill showing your name and address.

Keep proof when you apply for programs

Some programs will ask for proof that you have applied for HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program) and PIPP (Percentage of Income Payment Plan). These are the two main federal energy assistance programs available in Ohio.

Gather documents before you apply

Have your income information and other bills and documents ready before you start an application. For online submissions, a cellphone photo of these documents is good enough if you are submitting them online.

Submitting documents

You can make copies or send faxes of your documents from your local library branch. Libraries also have computers available to fill out online applications.

Keep your originals

Make copies or take photos of your documents to submit. Hang on to your original documents.

Zero income

If you have no income, you'll be asked for an IRS tax transcript. If you filed a tax return, or even if you did not, you can go to <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/get-transcript> to get your transcript.

Check back often

Local nonprofits that take applications for the federal utility assistance often require you to make an appointment. Step Forward and CHN Housing Partners in Cleveland have limited time slots for appointments, which are often virtual or over the phone. Check in the morning or several times throughout the day.

For the most up-to-date information on available programs or help with the process call [United Way's 2-1-1 helpline](#) or [chat with a navigator online](#).

2022 federal poverty guideline annual income reference

Household members		150%	175%	200%
	1	\$20,385	\$23,783	\$27,180
	2	\$27,465	\$32,043	\$36,620
	3	\$34,545	\$40,303	\$46,060
	4	\$41,625	\$48,563	\$55,500
	5	\$48,705	\$56,823	\$64,940
	6	\$55,785	\$65,083	\$74,380
	7	\$62,865	\$73,343	\$83,820
	8	\$69,945	\$81,603	\$93,260
	9	\$77,025	\$89,863	\$102,700
	10	\$84,105	\$98,123	\$112,140
	11	\$91,185	\$106,383	\$121,580
	12	\$98,265	\$114,643	\$131,020
	13	\$105,345	\$122,903	\$140,460
	14	\$112,425	\$131,163	\$149,900

List of common documents required:

- Copies of past-due utility bills
- Photo ID
- Social Security cards for household members. Can include printouts from Social Security showing the full number.
- Medicaid cards and Ohio Works First SNAP printouts.
- Proof of one month of income for everybody 18 or older in a household. Keep in mind you need each paystub you've received for the month.
- Proof of citizenship or legal residency: often Social Security cards, birth certificates or passports. Only U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals or immigrants with a qualified alien (immigrant) status are eligible for most of these programs. Some agencies will only accept birth certificates (or newborn birth letters). You can obtain copies of birth certificates by calling the Cleveland Department of Health's Bureau of Vital Statistics at (866) 691-1914.

- Proof that you have applied for programs such as HEAP and PIPP.
- Proof of any disability or health issue such as a note from your doctor or counselor.

Where else can I look for help?

Call United Way's 211 helpline for the most up-to-date information. Trained navigators will help you find the help you need, whether it's for utility bills or for help finding housing or food. Some local service providers are:

Salvation Army of Greater Cleveland: (216) 861-8185

Legal Aid Society of Cleveland: (216) 687-1900 (216-586-3190 for Spanish)

Northeast Ohio Coalition to End Homelessness (call to reach an outreach worker if you are homeless): (216) 432-0540

Catholic Charities: (800) 860-7373

Cleveland Public Library: (216) 623-2800

Lakewood Community Services Center: (216) 226-6466

Greater Cleveland Food Bank Help Center: (216) 738-2067

Community Housing Solutions: (216) 231-5815

Cuyahoga County Job and Family Services: (844) 640-6646

EDEN: (216) 961-9690

May Dugan Center: (216) 631-5800

Journey Center for Safety and Healing (for survivors of domestic or sexual violence): (216) 229-2420

For birth certificates: Cleveland Department of Health's Bureau of Vital Statistics at (866) 691-1914.

This guide was originally created by Conor Morris and Rachel Dissell as a project of the [Northeast Ohio Solutions Journalism Collaborative](#). Signal Cleveland staff members Olivera Perkins, Abbey Marshall, Stephanie Casanova, Gennifer Harding-Gosnell, Candice Wilder, April Urban and Rachel Dissell updated the guide in January 2023. Mary Ellen Huesken edited the guide.

