

Keeping Utilities On During the COVID-19 Crisis

(Updated 8/13/2021)



I can't afford my gas, electric, and/or water bills because of COVID-19. Will my service be shut off?

Unfortunately, most consumer protections for Chicago residents behind on their utility bills have expired. This means that utility companies have started sending disconnection notices, and Chicago residents can be disconnected for unpaid utility bills. **In order to avoid utility shut-off, you must act quickly. First, you should call your utility providers as soon as possible to set up a payment plan and ask about other financial assistance.**

- o ComEd- **1-800-334-7661**
- o Peoples Gas - **866-556-6001**
- o Nicor Gas - **888-642-6748**
- o City of Chicago Department of Water - **312-744-4420**

What should I do if my service is already off?

Seek help with one or more of the programs listed on this flyer. In addition, you can try to keep service on with a deferred payment arrangement (DPA). More information on DPAs is below. You can avoid disconnection or get service turned back on by contacting your utility providers directly to try to get service restored for less than the full payment of the bill, with a DPA.

Starting September 1, Reconnection Assistance (RA) can help you pay the amount needed to get your service turned back on. For more information about RA, visit cedaorg.net or call **1-800-571-2332**.

Please note that **unless the water department is a public utility, they are not required to reconnect you unless you pay 100% of what you owe on past bills.**

What other programs are available to help me keep up with my utility bills during COVID-19?

Deferred Payment Agreements (DPA) for customers of all public utilities including Ameren Illinois, Aqua Illinois, ComEd, Ill. American Water Co., Nicor Gas, Utilities Services of Ill., North Shore Gas, and Peoples Gas:

- All households may pay the past due balance over 18 months, with 10% down.
- All customers may renegotiate their DPA at least once with no penalty.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance program (LIHEAP)

LIHEAP is a federally-funded program which helps low-income households meet their energy needs. You can apply for 2021-2022 LIHEAP starting **September 1, 2021**. Once approved for LIHEAP, you will not be disconnected for non-payment until **April 1, 2022**. You can get help with applying for LIHEAP at 800-571-2332 or at www.cedaorg.net. To apply, you will need electric and gas bills from the last 30 days, proof of income documents, social security card(s), and a state ID.

City of Chicago Department of Water offers payment plans and has a Utility Billing Relief program (UBR). To apply, contact the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County (CEDA) at **1-800-571-2332** or check online at cedaorg.net/find-services/utility-billing-relief/.



Call

312.341.1070

OR



Apply Online

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between 8 AM and 4:30 PM

www.legalaidchicago.org

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- **ComEd Residential Special Hardship (RSH)** gives up to \$500 for people suffering from hardships. You can apply with CEDA by calling 1-800-571-2332 or visit their website, www.cedaorg.net. For more information about RSH, go to: www.comed.com/MyAccount/Customersupport/Pages/ResidentialHardship.aspx
- **ComEd's HEAL program** assists people who have been hospitalized. You can apply through the hospital or directly with ComEd at www.comed.com.
- **Peoples Gas' Share the Warmth (STW)** gives up to \$200 to help with gas bills. You can apply with CEDA by calling 1-800-571-2332 or visit their website, www.cedaorg.net. For more information about STW, go to: <https://www.peoplesgasdelivery.com/payment-bill/share-warmth>
- **Nicor Gas' Sharing Program** gives up to \$400 to customers to help with their gas bill. The Nicor Gas Sharing Program is administered by the Salvation Army. For more information, visit: <https://www.nicorgas.com/residential/billingandpaymentoptions/energy-assistance-programs/sharing-program.html>
- **Low Income Home Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)** is a temporary federal program to assist with water and sewer service. This program will run from **October 2021 through September 30, 2023**, or whenever the funds run out. People who are eligible for LIHEAP will also be eligible for LIHWAP without providing additional proof of income. LIHWAP will provide **one-time grants of up to \$1,500 for water and/or sewer service**. Please note that the LIHWAP requires a households to have a disconnection notice or be on the list to be disconnected, or a past-due balance of at least \$250 to receive help. **We will provide more information on how to apply when it becomes available.**
- Rental assistance programs can be used to help to pay utilities. More federal rental and utility assistance is expected to become available soon. For more information, go to: <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares/emergency-rental-assistance-program>

I need help paying my utility bills but I'm worried that I will need to disclose my immigration status in order to get help. Is this true?

Utility providers are not allowed to ask customers who seek assistance to prove legal residency or immigration status.

Please note, immigrants can apply for LIHEAP through state funding.

Non-citizens can also apply for LIHWAP if anyone in the household is a citizen.



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