

Gov. Evers: Announces \$18 million to help Wisconsin families pay water bills

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Rent and utility assistance programs still available for households in need

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced \$18 million in funding is available through the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) to provide water utility assistance to Wisconsin families. The program was authorized as part of an emergency effort to respond to COVID-19 and marks the first time that these water assistance funds have been made available for Wisconsin residents.

“We know Wisconsinites are stretched thin with businesses facing supply chain challenges and Wisconsin families seeing costs in their everyday lives go up, and we want them to know that help is available, especially now during the winter season,” said Gov. Evers. “These critical funds will help alleviate some of the financial stress families are facing and ensure that folks have the resources they need to make ends meet.”

To date, \$86,176,302 in benefits have been provided to 20,096 households for rental, utility, and other housing assistance needs through the Wisconsin Emergency Rental Assistance (WERA) program, and since the start of the heating season in October, the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) has issued benefits to 74,765 households totaling \$41,027,864. The average heating and electric benefits are \$392 and \$182, respectively.

“We want to make sure folks in Wisconsin know that you can get help with paying for water, energy, internet costs, and rent,” said DOA Secretary Joel Brennan. “No one should be left without heat or means to pay their bills during the holiday season.”

The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) is working with Energy Services, Inc. (ESI) for LIHWAP application intake. Eligibility is based on household income, household size, and the household’s water and utility burden. Residents may be eligible if they earn 60 percent of the state median income level or less. Eligible applicants for LIHWAP first need to apply and qualify for WHEAP. Wisconsin residents interested in applying should call 2-1-1 or 1-800-506-5596.

“We want folks to know that anyone who meets the income guidelines and needs help should apply for water, energy, or rental assistance,” said DOA Division of Energy, Housing, and Community Resources Division Administrator Susan Brown. “You can apply even if you haven’t had COVID-19 or gotten sick. So many families have lost hours, wages, or had their costs increase for the basic things they need to live during the pandemic. Many individuals and households can qualify and should call 2-1-1 or 800-506-5595—don’t wait.”

Rent and additional utility assistance is also available through the WERA program. The DOA has partnered with Wisconsin Community Action agencies and ESI to accept applications and distribute rental, internet, and utility assistance. Residents of Brown, Dane, Milwaukee, and Waukesha counties and the cities of Madison and Milwaukee can apply directly to their local government’s rental assistance provider. Wisconsin residents who wish to apply should call 2-1-1 or visit the [DOA website](#) for more information.