

ONE YEAR LATER:

Celebrating the Impact of the American Rescue Plan on the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program

Administration for Children and Families
Office of Community Service



ONE YEAR LATER: AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN & LIHWAP

On March 11, 2021, Congress appropriated \$500 million in emergency funds to the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 to provide funds to assist low-income households with water and wastewater bills. This was in addition to the \$638 million in funding appropriated for LIHWAP under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. The additional funding provided by ARP made LIHWAP a one billion dollar program.

On the one-year anniversary of the ARP being signed into law, the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Community Services (OCS) is celebrating the work of our grant recipients to support households by providing critical assistance needed to ensure connection to in-home water and wastewater services.

LIHWAP's Successful Launch:



- Forty-nine states, the District of Columbia, five U.S territories, and over one hundred Native American tribes and tribal organizations are administering LIHWAP.
- LIHWAP grant recipients have entered into agreements with over 5,000 water and wastewater service providers.
- LIHWAP has served over **85,000** households.

BACKGROUND ON LIHWAP AND ARP

Access to safe and affordable drinking water and wastewater services is a fundamental element of health, safety, and well-being for households across America. Yet water affordability is a significant and growing concern in communities across the country, and many communities have faced significant challenges related to water safety, aging water infrastructure, and water shortages due to drought.

For many low-income households across America, water affordability needs have been significantly exacerbated by the COVID-19 public health crisis, and while water is required to follow the federal guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advising washing hands frequently in order to reduce the transmission of COVID-19, the pandemic has made it significantly more difficult for individuals and families to pay their home drinking water and wastewater bills.

With funds from the ARP, states, territories, and tribes have been able to help protect the health and safety of households across the country by:

- Reconnecting households that have been disconnected from water and wastewater services
- Preventing disconnection for households that are at risk for water and wastewater disconnections
- Providing payment assistance to households that are struggling with water and wastewater affordability

SUCCESS STORIES

Grant recipients at the state, territory, and tribal level are working diligently to maximize the use of ARP funds through creative innovations and programmatic changes. The following examples highlight just some of the impact the ARP and LIHWAP have made so far.



REACHING HOUSEHOLDS IN NEED:

Over 85,000 households have received a LIHWAP benefit so far, and in less than four months of standing up their LIHWAP programs, Kentucky has already served over **36,000 households** and North Carolina has served over **21,000 households**. Grant recipients across the country are also pursuing innovative partnerships and strategies to reach households. For example, the Modoc Nation is partnering with their tribal housing authority to serve eligible households and reach families most in need.



STREAMLINED APPLICATION AND BENEFIT DETERMINATION PROCESSES:

To help administer this emergency program, grant recipients are streamlining application and benefit determination processes. For example, Arizona implemented a streamlined application process that **combines LIHWAP and LIHEAP applications into one form, which they are able to process within 24 hours of submission**. Additionally, the Pueblo of Laguna created a points-based benefits matrix to determine household benefit amounts. **Benefits range from \$110 to \$990** based on a variety of factors, including income, utility burden, and the presence of vulnerable household members.



AGREEMENTS WITH WATER UTILITY VENDORS:

With over **50,000 water utility vendors across the country**, LIHWAP grant recipients have worked diligently and swiftly to reach and enter into agreements with the vendors in their communities. Iowa has entered into agreements with over **500** water utility vendors. Minnesota has entered into agreements with **465** water utility vendors and Ohio has entered into **320** agreements. In total, across the LIHWAP network, grant recipients have entered into agreements with **over 5,000 water vendors** to help serve households in need. Grant recipients are also leveraging unique partnerships to reach water utility vendors. For example, Montana's Department of Public Health and Human Services is partnering with the Department of Environmental Quality's Water Bureau and the Montana League of Cities and Towns to share information about the program with vendors.

LIHWAP Next Steps:

- LIHWAP grant recipients continue to build relationships with local water and wastewater systems.
- OCS will publish an interactive dashboard with key performance indicators for all grantees.
- OCS will host stakeholder engagements and conduct outreach to beneficiaries.

"You don't realize how important [water] is until you don't have it. And I could not imagine not having it, and not being able to get help to get it. And that's what LIHWAP did for me. It put me in a place that I was able to have the basic necessities of life: water."

– NORTH CAROLINA LIHWAP BENEFICIARY